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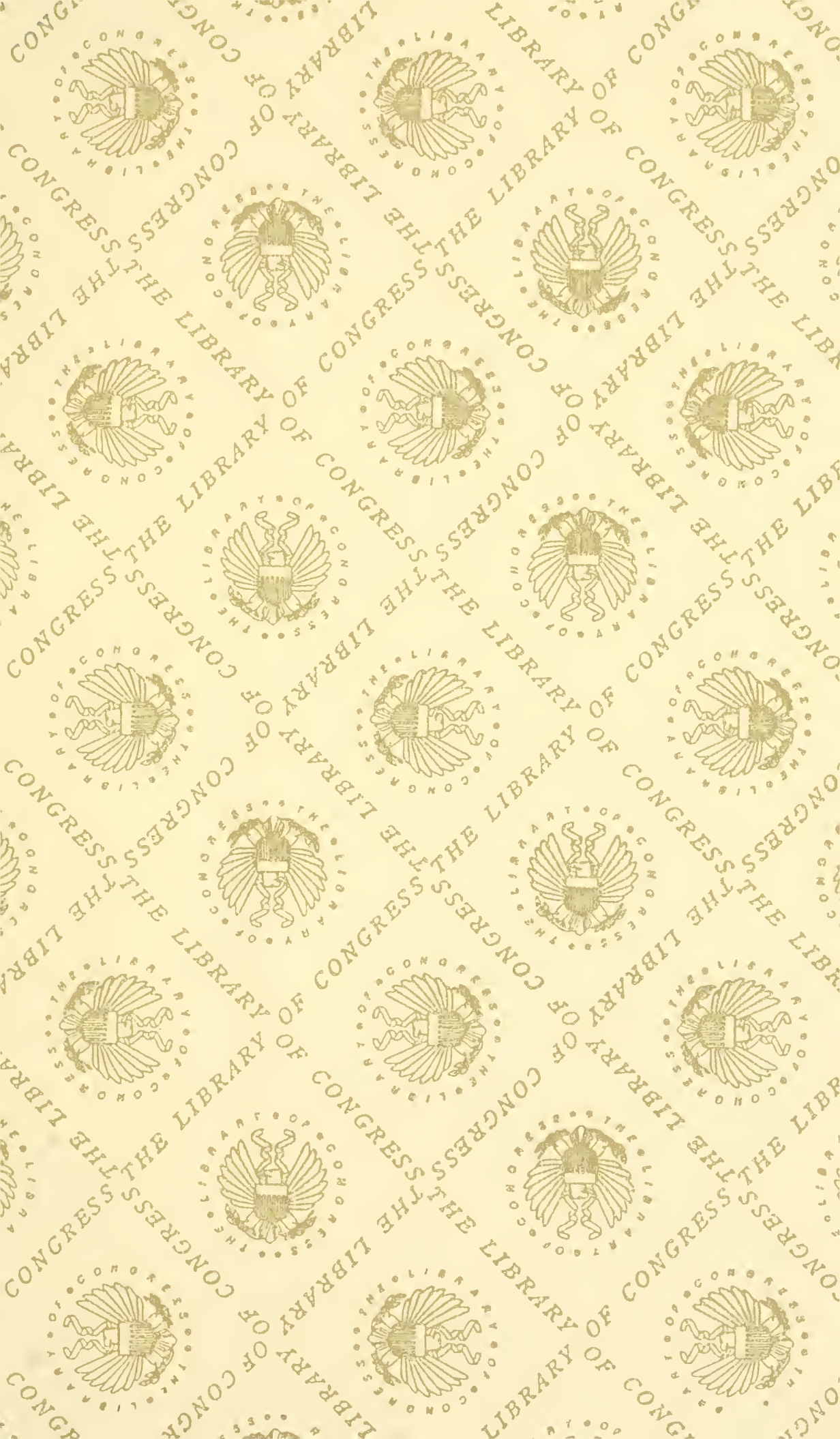
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PRICE THIRTY-FIVE CENTS

HOME ACRES

BY
ARTHUR LEWIS TUBBS



THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA

Successful Rural Plays

A Strong List From Which to Select Your Next Play

FARM FOLKS. A Rural Play in Four Acts, by ARTHUR LEWIS TUBBS. For five male and six female characters. Time of playing, two hours and a half. One simple exterior, two easy interior scenes. Costumes, modern. Flora Goodwin, a farmer's daughter, is engaged to Philip Burleigh, a young New Yorker. Philip's mother wants him to marry a society woman and by falsehoods makes Flora believe Philip does not love her. Dave Weston, who wants Flora himself, helps the deception by intercepting a letter from Philip to Flora. She agrees to marry Dave, but on the eve of their marriage Dave confesses, Philip learns the truth, and he and Flora are reunited. It is a simple plot, but full of speeches and situations that sway an audience alternately to tears and to laughter.

HOME TIES. A Rural Play in Four Acts, by ARTHUR LEWIS TUBBS. Characters, four male, five female. Plays two hours and a half. Scene, a simple interior—same for all four acts. Costumes, modern. One of the strongest plays Mr. Tubbs has written. Martin Winn's wife left him when his daughter Ruth was a baby. Harold Vincent, the nephew and adopted son of the man who has wronged Martin, makes love to Ruth Winn. She is also loved by Len Everett, a prosperous young farmer. When Martin discovers who Harold is, he orders him to leave Ruth. Harold, who does not love sincerely, yields. Ruth discovers she loves Len, but thinks she has lost him also. Then he comes back, and Ruth finds her happiness.

THE OLD NEW HAMPSHIRE HOME. A New England Drama in Three Acts, by FRANK DUMONT. For seven males and four females. Time, two hours and a half. Costume modern. A play with a strong heart interest and pathos, yet rich in humor. Easy to act and very effective. A rural drama of the "Old Homestead" and "Way Down East" type. Two exterior scenes, one interior, all easy to set. Full of strong situations and delightfully humorous passages. The kind of a play everybody understands and likes.

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THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA

HOME ACRES

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1601

A Drama in Three Acts

By

ARTHUR LEWIS TUBBS

*Author of "The Finger of Scorn," "Home
Ties," "Farm Folks," etc.*



PHILADELPHIA
THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY

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FEB 24 1922

Home Acres

Home Acres

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(In the order of their first appearance.)

ANN RICKETT,

A dressmaker, who generally has her say

JANE WHITMAN.....*Rooted in the soil*

DAVID HOLDEN.....*A young farmer*

ROSE WHITMAN.....*A country flower*

LIB.....*Out of her element*

ENOCH.....*The chore boy*

JOHN WHITMAN.....*Who has been to college*

WILFRED CLAY.....*A New Yorker*

HELEN DALTON,

A product of "The Gay White Way"

JIM FERGUSON.....*A schemer*

ARGUMENT

John Whitman comes back home, and is received with joy by his maiden aunt, Jane Whitman, who has been the same as a mother to him and his sister, Rose. John brings with him a young New Yorker, Wilfred Clay, his college chum, who has urged him to sell the farm and live in New York and see "real life." John sells the farm. Act two passes in New York, various events lead up to catastrophe. The last act brings the characters back to the country. John has lost everything and is in despair, but he, Aunt Jane and Rose meet with a joyful surprise. The real owner of their old home proves to be David Holden, who wins Rose and is the means of bringing peace and happiness back to his old friends.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I.—The sitting-room at Home Acres, a farm in Northeastern New York State, on an afternoon in July.

ACT II.—The new home in the city, the following December.

ACT III.—Back home, the first of March.

TIME OF PLAYING:—About two hours.

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS

ANN RICKETT. A typical village dressmaker and gossip. Character part. About forty or forty-five years of age; plain, quick and inquisitive, but not a caricature. In Act I she wears a calico or gingham dress, with hat. In Act II, winter dress of dark material, with wraps, bonnet, etc.; has bag or dress-suit case, umbrella, and a fair-sized package carefully done up with brown paper. Act III, her best dress, with fancy neck-piece, ribbon and pin.

JANE WHITMAN. Although unmarried, she is a sweet, motherly woman, of about fifty, with kind face, white hair plainly combed, a gentle manner and pleasant voice. In Act I, plain summer house dress; Act II, more "dressed up," but still plain and modest. Act III, dark winter dress, bonnet and wraps.

DAVID HOLDEN. A well-built, good-looking young country fellow, about twenty-five; generous, good-natured, but strong and manly. Wears plain summer suit with straw hat in Act I; in Act II, heavier suit, with overcoat; Act III, same or similar to Act II.

ROSE WHITMAN. A pretty, somewhat shy, winsome, country girl. Act I, modest, becoming summer

COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS

dress, changing to the new one which Ann Rickett is supposed just to have finished, this being a bit more fancy, but not elaborate. Act II, more stylish, but not over-dressed, in afternoon costume of good city style. Act III, thicker winter dress, with wraps.

LIB. A New York Bowery "tough girl," from fourteen to sixteen years old. May have pretty face, but should appear rough and "smart," without offensiveness. Rather coarse voice and slangy manner of speech. Act I, calico dress, torn and bespattered with mud, stockings torn, shoes worn and muddy, hair awry and straw hat tattered. Act II, black costume of stylish French maid, with small white apron, white caps, etc. She seems in this ill at ease and out of place, constantly forgetting her new pose. Act III, at first, plain working dress, with large apron; later, change to over-elaborate "dress-up," showing attempt to be stylish, with cheap jewelry.

ENOCH. Country boy of eighteen or thereabouts, crude and countrified, but not a "bumpkin." Working clothes, with baggy trousers, colored shirt, suspenders and wide-brimmed straw hat, in Act I; in Act II, dress of fashionable butler, in which he appears wholly out of place. Act III, his new "dress up city suit," over which at first he wears long overcoat, with muffler and cap.

JOHN WHITMAN. Tall, handsome fellow of about twenty-five, showing results of education and association with cultured people, but not too self-conscious. Must be likeable, with all his pretense. Nice summer suit, straw hat in Act I; well-fitting and becoming business suit, with handsome top-coat, in Act II; and for Act III, winter suit and heavy overcoat.

WILFRED CLAY. Good-looking, rather "swell" city fellow, about John's age. A villain beneath his suave, affable manner. Act I, elegant light summer suit, straw hat; Act II, another elegant suit, for winter wear, with dressy overcoat.

PROPERTIES

HELEN DALTON. A girl of about twenty, twenty-two, or thereabouts; a real "beauty," with a somewhat superficial charm of manner. At times shows her natural lack of real breeding and true womanliness. Somewhat of a coquette, inclined to be unscrupulous to gain her ends, but not the accepted "vamp" type. Changes in final scene to a softened, repentant and more lovable mood. In Act II, she is elaborately gowned, with elegant wrap and hat. Act III, beautiful evening gown, which shows off her charms to the best advantage.

JIM FERGUSON. About thirty-five years of age, a typical New York scheming business man, of the "promoter" sort. A veneer of polish, not altogether hiding his true nature, though he exerts himself to make a good impression.

PROPERTIES

ACT I. Good sized, flat newspaper parcel, supposed to contain a dress, neatly folded; travelling bags; dress-suit case; umbrellas; long twig or stick, with string and bent pin for a fishing pole; small, battered tin pail; loaf of bread and bread-knife; bundles.

ACT II. Paper resembling legal document; fountain pen.

ACT III. Knitting work; firewood; white paper torn in small bits for snow, seen falling outside of window. Artificial snow or salt to be used on the shoulders and heads of characters; large spoon; sleigh bells; small cabinet organ.

NOTICE TO PROFESSIONALS

This play is published for the free use of strictly amateur companies only. Professional actors or organizations wishing to produce it, in any form or under any title, are forbidden to do so without the consent of the author, who may be addressed in care of the publishers.

Home Acres

ACT I

SCENE.—*The sitting-room at Home Acres, a pleasant, comfortably furnished room, with door and window in C., open to yard, with a glimpse of trees, flowers, fence, etc., and, beyond, the road and fields. It is the middle of an afternoon in July. At rise, ANN RICKETT is seen outside of door, where she pauses, knocks, looking in; there is no reply, and, after a brief pause, she comes inside, knocking again on side of the open door, more loudly. She carries a good-sized, flat parcel, in newspapers, over one arm. She comes down to C., just as JANE WHITMAN enters R.)*

ANN RICKETT. Good-afternoon, Miss Whitman. I knocked, but nobuddy come, so I walked right in, seein' the door was open. Knew it'd be all right, bein' me.

JANE WHITMAN. Why, of course, Ann. You're right at home here, I hope. I heard knocking, but was busy fixing things for supper and couldn't come just at once. Been expecting you.

ANN. Well, here I am, not more'n ten minutes late, if I am that. All out of breath, I rushed so, and it's so hot. But I'm one dressmaker that keeps her word, if I do say so. You can uphold me in that, I guess, Miss Whitman.

JANE. Why, yes, Ann, I can, though I begun to think you were going to break your record for promptness this time. Rose is in there just about having

a fit, for fear you wouldn't get here in time with that dress, so 't she could get all fixed up before John comes. But there's plenty of time, I guess. (*Goes closer to ANN and lifts corner of paper, looking at contents.*) Is it all done? Shall I take it in?

(ANN partly uncovers package, giving JANE a glimpse of the dress which it contains, then crosses to R., where she pauses. JANE is C.)

ANN. No, thanks, I will. I want to put it on her myself and be sure it's all right, though I know it is. Fit? Well, I guess Rose Whitman 'll have one, and a good one, too, after all the tryin' on she's had and the pains I've took with this dress. If I do say it, I manage to keep up with the styles—take two fashion papers and all. But as for some of the styles nowadays—land, I'd expect t' go straight to Perdition if I s' much as cut out a pattern for one of 'em.

JANE. Yes, I know—some of them are scandalous. I don't know what the world's coming to.

ANN. Comin'? Goin', I should say—back to Mis' Adam. But I'd better go and get this dress on Rose, or she'll be having more fits 'n one.

JANE. Yes, and I'll go and finish getting supper. I can't find Lib anywhere, just when I need her most, as usual. We're going to have a regular feast, in honor of John's coming home from college. It's quite an event.

ANN (*still in door, R.*). I should say it is. My, I suppose he's eddicated right up to the top notch. Won't have much use for some of us country folks any more, I reckon.

JANE. Now, Ann, you know better. That isn't like John. Besides, he's only a country boy himself.

ANN. Yes, but college eddicated and city visited, 'n' all like that. Ain't been home here for—most two years, ain't it?

JANE. Yes, it is, but—well, you see, he had invitations at vacation times, and took some trips with

friends of his. One of them's coming home with him for a visit—Mr. Clay.

ANN. Huh! one of them stuck-up city fell'ws in dude-clothes, I suppose, that'll try t' make out he never was in the country—never even seen a cow, mebbe, 'n' want t' know which kind gives buttermilk—like that girl 't boarded at Crandall's last summer. Made me sick. As for your John, I've heard of country boys before with college eddications and citified ideas. But, my land, I'm forgett'n' about this dress. Rose 'll be havin' seven or eight fits by this time.

(Exit ANN, R., hurriedly; JANE smiles, with a slow shake of her head; goes up C., to door, looks off and sees DAVE HOLDEN as he appears from L.)

JANE. Why, good-afternoon, Dave. Come right in.

(Enter DAVE HOLDEN, D. F., from L.)

DAVE HOLDEN. Thanks, Miss Whitman. How d' do? I just dropped around a minute. Heard John was coming home this afternoon.

JANE. Yes, he is. We're expecting him any minute. Enoch drove over to Thurman to meet him.

DAVE. That's good news. About time your "wandering boy" drifted back this way, isn't it? Just imagine being away from Chesterville—and Home Acres—for two years.

JANE. Yes, it does seem a long time—longer to us than to him, I suppose. John has been realizing his life dream, you know. He always said he meant to go to college, and he's been. I hope it all turns out as he's planned. But won't you sit down, Dave?

DAVE. No, I guess not, thanks. Just thought I'd stop a minute. I don't want to butt in too soon after John gets here, but I was sort of anxious to see him. Heard a little news that sort of surprised me. I suppose, of course, you know about it ———

HOME ACRES

JANE. Why, I can't say, Dave. I guess I don't just know what you mean—aside from John's coming home, and, of course, that's not news exactly. Was there anything else?

DAVE. I—m-m—I don't know's I ought to tell you, if you don't know. But, of course, it can't be a secret from you. John wouldn't do that.

JANE. Do what? What is it, David?

DAVE. Of course, it may be only a rumor, but I heard down at the post-office that John had written to Matt Culver about selling the farm for him.

JANE. Not our farm—not Home Acres!

DAVE. That's what I heard. I supposed you knew—it may not be true——

JANE. Of course it isn't true. John never would think of such a thing, and without consulting me. Why, I'm just the same as a mother to him—have been ever since his own mother died, when he was four years old. Sell Home Acres, that's been ours for years and years—his and his father's before him, and his grandfather's? I would never consent. John never would do such a thing—he couldn't!

(She is greatly perturbed, sinks into chair, R. C., as if almost overcome. DAVE stands C., looking at her sympathizingly.)

DAVE. I'm sorry I said anything, Miss Whitman, if John hasn't told you. Maybe he'll think I've been interfering, but—well, I heard Mr. Culver telling it, and——

JANE. There must be some mistake. I'm sure John never would think of selling Home Acres. Where else could we live? What—why, what could we do? We have never known any other home.

DAVE. I wouldn't worry. Of course, John wouldn't do it without your consent. But I suppose with college life, the city, and things like that—that's how it acts on a young man sometimes, you know—a boy from the country, when he goes away and gets a glimpse of “real life,” as they call it.

I suppose life on the farm looks pretty small and narrow after that.

JANE. Small? Narrow? Yes, I know. (*She has risen and stands R. C., speaking earnestly, as if deeply moved by her emotions.*) And the world is big and wide, and wicked and enticing. But John—our John. I can't believe it. No matter what he has seen and learned, he couldn't want to give up our old home. Why, my brother Henry—his father—would turn over in his grave; I feel as if he would come back and haunt us, if we should sell the place that has been our home for so many years—ours and those before us for generations. (*She is close to DAVE, now takes hold of his hand, or arm, pleadingly.*) Oh, David, you—you're not deceiving me—just trying to make it easier by breaking it to me gently? You don't mean that it's true—that he has sold it—already?

DAVE. No, no, Miss Whitman. I've told you all I know. Just that Matt Culver said he has been asked—by John—to find a purchaser, and he's on the track of one.

JANE. Who—who is it?

DAVE. Mr. Culver said that wasn't to be known yet, till the deal had been made.

JANE. The—deal—made?

DAVE. Y-yes, that's how he put it.

JANE. Then perhaps it isn't too late. (*ROSE is heard laughing, off R.*) Hush, here comes Rose. Not a word to her, yet.

DAVE. No, of course not.

(*Enter ROSE WHITMAN, R.*)

ROSE. Oh, Aunt Jane, look! Isn't it scrumptious —? (*Sees DAVE, pauses in confusion.*) Oh, you here, Dave? I—didn't know —

DAVE. Don't mind me. Sure it's scrumptious—just wonderful. And so are you. Isn't she, Miss Whitman?

ROSE. Dave! You'll think me the vainest thing.

DAVE. No, nothing like that. Just the prettiest —
JANE. I won't have you spoiling her like that, Dave.
You may admire the new dress all you like—and
say so—but maybe it'd be just as well not to
praise a girl to her face, even our little Rose.
Turn around, dear.

(ROSE blushingly turns slowly about, for inspection.
JANE examines her critically, touching her here
and there, straightening a seam, and arranging a
flounce. DAVE puts on an exaggerated air of
wisdom, wrinkling his brows.)

DAVE. M-m—yes, I—guess it will do.
JANE. Do? I should say it will. It fits you per-
fectly, Rose, and does Miss Rickett credit.

(Enter ANN R., just in time to hear JANE's remark;
stands R.)

ANN. I guess it does, if I do say so. I don't believe
John Whitman'll have any call t' be ashamed of
his sister, even before his grand city friend. Do
you, Dave?

DAVE. If he is, I'll be ashamed of him, that's all, and
say he's no judge. Say, how about walking out
and looking up the road, Rose, and seeing if we
can't sight the procession? Want to?

ROSE. Yes, Dave, if they don't think I'll get all
mussed. (Looks inquiringly at JANE and ANN.)

DAVE. Of course you won't.

JANE. Run along, then, only don't go too far. They're
liable to be here any minute now.

(Exeunt DAVE and ROSE C. D. to L., he pretending to
be much alarmed for fear of mussing her clothes,
standing back for her to pass. She laughs mer-
rily and runs off, followed by him. ANN goes to
door, looking after them; JANE is R. C.)

ANN. If they don't make just about the nicest young
couple. I suppose it's understood?

JANE. What—that ——? Oh, I can't say as it is, anything definite. Of course, Dave's been sort of what they call "paying attention" to her for a long time now, and she's never seemed to object very much. But, then, they've been playmates, like, ever since they could toddle. But Dave's a fine boy, and I guess she could do worse.

ANN. I guess she could. He's well off, too, with that money his uncle down in Washington county left him, with what he got from his father, too, and owning some shares in the graphite mines. But, of course, her college graduate brother may have higher notions for her.

JANE. Dear me, don't let's talk about it. I've enough to worry about already. I—that is, I mean, what with John coming home, with his city friends, and all.

ANN. There! I knew something was the matter, the minute I come in this room. I noticed the change in your face, Miss Whitman, the first thing. I seem to have a sort of insight int' things—what is it they call it?—"py-sick," or something like that. Means "mediumistical," or something. 'T any rate, I've got it, and I can tell something's come over you sence I went out of this room, not more'n ten minutes ago.

JANE. Why, Ann, how could there? What could happen?

ANN. You could hear something you didn't want to hear, in less time than that. I don't s'pose it's any of my business if you have; but I'm an old friend of yours, Jane Whitman, and I'd be sorry if you was afraid to confide in me. I can keep a friend's secret better'n most, if I do say so, so you needn't be afraid. B'sides, I think I could come pretty near guessing what it is, anyway.

JANE. Why, Ann, what do you mean?

ANN. I wa'n't going to say a word, till he'd got home and you was all settled down again and all. But if Dave Holden wa'n't saying something about that old skinflint, Matt Culver, and what he's up

to, I'll stop makin' stylish dresses and take in washin'.

JANE. Then—it is common talk—it is known, and I'm the last to hear of it. I didn't think John could do such a thing. (*Again sinks into chair.*) It has spoiled all the pleasure of his coming home.

ANN. I wouldn't believe a word of it till I had to. Likely it ain't so. I only heard it this mornin', in the post-office. Wa'n't s'posed to, then, but some of the men was talkin'—and, say, talk about women bein' gossips!—and—well, I put two and two together. I'm pretty quick that way, if I do say so. I jest sort o' caught enough to give me the idee that Matt Culver had been writin' to your John, tryin' t' get him t' sell the farm. Must be a gold mine on it, or somethin'. You wouldn't catch Matt Culver takin' a hand in it if he didn't see a pretty good chance for himself. That man may be an elder in the church, but he's got to be a good deal older'n he is now to pull the wool over my eyes. But I wouldn't worry another bit, Miss Whitman. I guess John'll come to his senses when he sees how you feel about it.

JANE (*rising, going R.*). I'll try not to. Just now I'll have to go and see what's become of Lib, and what she's up to. I guess that will occupy my mind for a few minutes.

ANN. I should say it would—that one! I don't see how you ever put up with such a harum-scarum, Miss Whitman. Land, I'd about as soon have a wild hyeny in the house as her. (*She is up C., now glances off D. F. to R.*) Land, here she comes now. Of all——

JANE. Well, it's about time.

(LIB suddenly runs in D. F., from R. *She wears torn straw hat, or sunbonnet; her hair flying; she has on a short calico or gingham dress, which is torn and covered with mud; one of her stockings is down over her shoe, while the other has a big hole in it, and she is generally "a wreck."* She carries

a small tin pail and a long twig, to one end of which is tied a piece of string, with a bent pin, making an impromptu fishing-pole.)

LIB. Say, is supper ready?

JANE. Supper? I should say not. You were supposed to be here and help get it. Where under the sun have you been? You're a sight.

LIB *(looking herself over, carelessly)*. Guess I am, but I couldn't help it. Went fishing and fell in the brook. Then, comin' home, Spencer's old bull chased me and I tore my dress on the fence pilin' over, and after I got away from him I met Bud Hackett and him and me had a fight. I licked him, too—knocked him flat in the first round.

ANN. You're a perfect little heathen.

LIB. Oh, that you, Miss Ricketty? P'rtend you're a fish.

(Flings line over ANN'S head, trying to hook her hat. ANN dodges and screams, LIB chasing her.)

ANN. Stop it! Stop, I say! Miss Whitman, can't you make her behave?

JANE. Elizabeth, stop that and behave yourself. I never saw such actions. Here—give me that stick.

(She seizes LIB, takes pole and shakes her, not roughly, with stick uplifted.)

ANN. I wish you'd give her a good trouncin', Miss Whitman. She deserves it. She ought to be shut up in jail. I reckon that's the kind o' folks she come from——

LIB *(flying at ANN, in a rage)*. Shut up, you old chromo! How dare you call me a jail-bird? I'd like to wallop you a good one for that.

ANN *(running from her)*. My goodness sakes alive, she's a regular wild Injun! Get away from me.

(JANE again seizes LIB, holding her; ANN is up c., in a state of great perturbation.)

JANE. That will do. You go into that kitchen and wash yourself, and try to look a little more like a human being. I'll be there in a minute and see to you.

LIB (*as she goes R.*). Well, she needn't get so fresh. (*As JANE pushes her to exit, R.*) I'll get even with you yet, you—you——

(*JANE has hold of her, and now pushes her off R., LIB wriggling and looking back at ANN, making faces at her, as she exits R. JANE stands R., with a sigh of exhaustion.*)

JANE. My, but she's a case!

ANN. Case? I should say she was—a case o' dynamite. I don't see why you ever keep her here, Miss Whitman. I wouldn't feel safe a minute.

JANE. Oh, she isn't so bad as all that. She only has those tantrums. She is very sensitive on the subject of jails, too, it seems. We've never found out much about her, but from things she's let drop I think her father must be in prison, or was, or something like that, and—well, maybe it's a good sign if she thinks it's a disgrace.

ANN. It's in the blood. You'll see. I've always said those fresh-air kids they send here are only the city scum, and she's one of the worst I ever see. But you're so easy. You would keep her.

JANE. Yes, and I'm not sorry. I hope to make something of her yet. Poor thing, she was nothing but skin and bones when they brought her here more'n a year ago; and I couldn't let her go back to that big, wicked city. I don't believe she would have lived two months.

ANN. And good riddance, mebbe. Seems t' me like a hopeless case.

JANE. You're too hard, Ann. No case is hopeless when love and kindness and good care are brought to bear. You rub her the wrong way.

ANN. I should say she's the one that does the rubbin'. I don't see how you can uphold her. I must be goin'.

JANE. I hope you're not offended, Ann.

ANN. No, of course I ain't. But I do think you're too easy with her. I'll have to be goin' anyway. Your John'll soon be here, with his city comp'ny 'n' I might not fit in.

JANE. You know better. But I'll have to go and see about that supper—and 'tend to Lib. Come over again soon, Ann.

ANN. Thanks, I will.

(Exit JANE, R.; ANN goes D. F., looks off, pauses, interested. Enter ENOCH, D. F., from L., with dress-suit case, bags, and other luggage.)

ENOCH. Here they be at last. Train was late. Oh, how d', Miss Rickett? That you?

ANN. Can't you see it ain't nobody else? *(Looking off to L.)* Land, is that John Whitman?

ENOCH. Sure. Can't you see 'tain't nobuddy else? 'N' look at the swell guy he's brung with him. Talk about "citified"—gosh, wait till Lib sees that!

ANN. I suppose it's that city friend of his—what they call a "swell."

ENOCH. Wal, if that one swells much more he'll bust.

(Enter D. F., from L., JOHN WHITMAN and ROSE. His arm is about her, she clinging to him. ANN crosses to R. C., as they come down; ENOCH L.)

JOHN WHITMAN. Here I am, little sister, at last. Glad to see me?

ROSE. Glad! Oh, John, I guess I am! My, but you've grown—or—something. Dear me, I—I know—you're "citified."

JOHN. But I'm the same John, to you—your big brother, who is mighty glad to see you and to be home again. Where's Aunt Jane?

ROSE. I don't know. I guess —

JOHN *(noticing ANN)*. Why, it's Miss Rickett. How do you do, Miss Rickett?

ANN. Well, thank you, John, and glad to see you back again. Stayed away long enough, didn't y'?

JOHN. Yes, I suppose I did. But everything looks about the same.

ANN. Why shouldn't it? We don't change here, like some folks. It ain't our way.

JOHN. Of course—I hope not ——

ANN. Well, I hope you haven't, inside, as much as you look like you had out, John Whitman. Eddication ain't everything. Is it, Rose?

ROSE. Why—no, not everything.

JOHN (*who has gone up, looking off to L.*). I wonder where Wilfred is.

ANN. That your city friend?

JOHN. Yes—Mr. Clay. Oh, there he is, out by the gate, looking like a fish out of water. He's talking with some one. It's— isn't that Dave Holden, Rose?

ROSE (*goes up, looks off*). Yes, that's Dave.

JOHN. Quite a contrast between him and Wilfred.

ANN. I s'pose they is, and it ain't necessarily t' Dave's discredit, either. He's one of the best, Dave Holden is. Ain't he, Rose?

ROSE. Why, yes—of course ——

JOHN. I wasn't saying anything against Dave, Miss Rickett, but compared with Mr. Clay—well! —— (*Coming down.*) Enoch, don't you know where to take those things?

ENOCH. Sure I do, Mr. Whitman; up to your old room and the one next to it. Hope they're grand enough for sech a swell ——

JOHN. That will do. Just take them up-stairs and be done with it.

(*Exit ENOCH L., with luggage, grinning.*)

ROSE (R.). And I'll go and tell Aunt Jane ——

ANN. You might let me. I ain't in no special hurry. She's been watchin' long enough, John, but she's just had a set-to with that Lib, and they've gone to see about supper. I'll go and tell her.

JOHN. Thanks.

(*Exit ANN R.*)

ROSE. John, is it you? Are you really home again?

JOHN. Of course. Don't you see me? Missed me, have you?

ROSE. I should say we have. I began to think you had forgotten us, that you would be ashamed of us now, with all your education and everything.

JOHN. Nonsense. You know better than that. Come, let me look at you. (*Turning her about, examining her critically.*) Why, you've grown to be a perfect little beauty, I declare you have. When you get some real clothes and a little more style ——

ROSE. Oh, John, and this is my new dress, that I had made on purpose for your coming home. Miss Rickett just brought it over, and—and now you say it isn't "real." You don't like it—you're ashamed of me. (*Almost weeping.*)

JOHN. Of course I like it; it's very pretty and all that, but—I want my little sister to have things worthy of her, to be able to hold her own with the best of them. Tell me, how would you like to go to the city and live, and see real life?

ROSE. I—don't know. How could I? Besides, I'm not sure I should want to leave here—it's home, and—and —— (*Pauses, in confusion.*)

JOHN. M'm—and is there anybody—in particular—whom you would be sorry to leave? (*She hangs her head, blushing.*) You don't mean Dave Holden?

ROSE. Why, n-no; there's nothing between Dave and me. Of course, I like him, and —— Oh, John, I don't want to talk about it.

JOHN. I understand. Dave's a fine fellow, I suppose, and I have nothing against him, but he isn't the kind of man I would pick out for my sister. You are worthy of better things than he can give you, and I mean that you shall have them.

ROSE. Oh, John, you almost frighten me.

JOHN. There, there, don't you worry. I'll look out for you. (*Puts an arm about her, patting her cheek affectionately.*)

(*Enter JANE, hurrying in R.; goes to JOHN, who takes her in his arms, kissing her. She is almost weeping.*)

JANE. John—my boy! You have come home at last? It has seemed so long.

JOHN. Yes, here I am. Doesn't it look like me?

JANE (*holding him off at arm's length*). Yes, you're the same John, and yet—there's something—something different. I don't know just what it is, but ——

JOHN. Oh, I guess it's only that I'm a little more like the real thing than I was three or four years ago, Aunt Jane.

JANE. But I don't want you to be anything "real," except my own boy—the same boy I've always had. I wouldn't want you to be any different. Would you, Rose?

ROSE. He is, though. I suppose he's more like a city gentleman. I declare, I'm almost afraid of him.

JOHN. Nonsense. Of course, I'm not the same ignorant country boy I used to be. You can't expect that, after four years in college, and all the advantages I've had. That wouldn't be natural, you know.

JANE. I suppose not. But it wouldn't be natural for you to change, it seems to me. I guess I'm so glad to see you that I'm not responsible for what I say. It will make the old place seem like home again. Just think, John, this farm has been our home for generations. You wouldn't want to leave Home Acres and go anywhere else to live, would you, John?

JOHN. I don't know—perhaps. But we won't talk about that just now. I'm too hungry, and I must see what's become of Wilfred. He will think I've deserted him.

JANE. Oh, yes, your city friend. You go and bring him in, you and Rose, and I'll go and see how Lib is getting along.

JOHN. And who is Lib, pray?

JANE. The little Fresh Air girl, who came here for two weeks last summer and was so sick I kept her and gave her a home. I wrote to you about her.

JOHN. I see. Works for her "board and keep."

ROSE. Or pretends to.

JANE. Now, Rose, you know she's quite a help, sometimes. I give her fifty cents a week, too. She's saving it up to go back to what she calls "The Gay Bright Way," or something like that.

JOHN. Broadway, she means. You ought to see that "Gay White Way." It would dazzle your eyes.

JANE. I dare say it would, and I'm not anxious to see it. I am quite contented here, and I hoped you would be.

JOHN. Do you think I was cut out to be a farmer, Aunt Jane—honestly?

JANE. You might be something worse. Your father was a farmer, and his father—and his—and good men, even if they didn't have "college educations" and such fine manners.

JOHN. Yes, but if I have an ambition to be something better—to make money—be rich——

JANE. We have plenty, and there's more to be made here.

JOHN. But there are other things to be considered. But we won't say any more about it now. I must look up Wilfred, and I'm anxious to see this little "Fresh Aired" of yours.

ROSE. I guess you'll see enough of her, once she gets started.

JANE. I'd better go see what she's up to. And you find your friend, John. He'll think you're neglecting him—all this time.

(Exit JANE R. JOHN and ROSE go up c.)

JOHN. I'm afraid he will. And I've told him so much about you, too.

ROSE. I don't suppose he will care much about me, if he's so grand and all.

JOHN. Of course he will. How can he help it?

(*Looking off D. F. to L.*) Ah, here he comes now. Wilfred, this way!

(*Enter D. F., from L., WILFRED CLAY. He is a typical young New York "swell," faultlessly attired, but in good taste, with a rather self-conscious and "superior" manner, though willing to make himself agreeable in a somewhat condescending way.*)

WILFRED CLAY. Oh, here you are. I began to wonder — (Sees ROSE.) Beg pardon.

JOHN. This is my sister Rose, Wilfred. Rose, Mr. Clay.

ROSE (*a bit shyly*). How do you do?

WILFRED. This is a great pleasure. I am delighted to meet you, Miss Whitman. I have heard so much of you from your brother. Such nice things.

ROSE. I'm afraid John is too partial to his "little sister," as he calls me.

WILFRED. Not at all, I am sure. I'm rather inclined to think he didn't say half enough.

JOHN. Wilfred, be careful. Don't turn her little head.

(WILFRED *plainly shows his admiration, which is at least half sincere, with a free and gallant manner, as if sure of his own powers of fascination. ROSE seems somewhat confused, walking away, as if anxious to escape.*)

ROSE. If you will excuse me —

(*Exit ROSE, D. F. to L., looking back, smiling timidly.*)

WILFRED. M'm—shy! What a treat. A really ingenuous, modest girl at last.

JOHN. You're not used to seeing them, are you? You frightened her just a little at first, but she'll soon be all right. I'm afraid you think I neglected you, leaving you out there so long, Wilfred. But "family reunions," and all that, you know.

WILFRED. It was quite all right, old man. Fact, I was quite sufficiently entertained—edified, you

might say—by that husky young yokel—a—Holden, I think he said his name is. The farm-hand hero type, you know. M'm—perhaps he's the kind the little sister has been more accustomed to. His sweetheart—what? How about it?

JOHN. Decidedly not, if I have anything to say about it, and I think I shall have. Holden is a fine young fellow, I believe—manly, energetic, and all that, but—don't you agree with me that my blushing Rose is too good for one of his sort?

WILFRED. Rather! Perfect little jewel, only in the wrong setting.

JOHN. I think we can remedy that. Jewels can be reset, you know.

(Enter LIB., R. She has on a large gingham apron, which almost envelops her. It is wet and not too tidy; her sleeves are rolled up and in one hand she has a large knife, in the other a whole loaf of bread. She stares at WILFRED.)

LIB. How do, Mister? Mist'ers, I mean. Which is him?

JOHN. Who are you, pray?

LIB. Go on, you! I don't say m' prayers in th' daytime. I'm Lib. Who're you, and which is which?

JOHN. I see, you're the lady from Broadway.

WILFRED. Indeed!

LIB. Aw, quit y'r guff. Y' can't fool me. I know y'. One of y's John, what's been away t' college and thinks he's too good t' live on a farm any more, 'n' the other's the city guy you've brung with y', t' see th' cows 'n' country gawks and the rest o' th' sights.

JOHN. Well, I'm John, if you want to know.

LIB *(to WILFRED)*. Then I s'pose you're the dude one? You look it.

JOHN. I think that will do, Lib —

LIB. "Lib" nothin'. You got me wrong, beau. The banquet's about t' be served in me castle. Will youse condescend to p'rtake?

(*Makes an elaborate gesture, spreading out her apron, waving knife in one hand and dropping the loaf of bread. She grabs up the bread, rubs it off with apron. ANN appears R., in time to see this.*)

ANN (*holding up her hands, horrified*). Of all things! What's that crazy kid up to now? You'd better go in that kitchen. Miss Whitman wants you.

LIB. Aw, go chase yourself. I'm the Lady —

ANN. You're a little heathen, that's what you are. You ought to be spanked, and you would, too, if I had my way.

LIB (*flourishing knife*). Oooo! I'll cut your head off and your heart out!

(*She threatens ANN, who runs about, much alarmed.*)

ANN. Go 'way! Get out! John, save me!

(*JOHN and WILFRED have been standing at one side, laughing. JOHN now approaches LIB; she runs to R., he following her.*)

LIB. Aw, who's afraid? You ain't s' much.

(*Exit LIB R., making a face at JOHN, and "sticking out her tongue" at ANN.*)

ANN. If she ain't a case. How your aunt ever lives with her in the house is more than I can understand. Int'rduce me to y'r friend, John.

JOHN. I beg your pardon. Miss Rickett, this is Mr. Wilfred Clay, from New York.

WILFRED (*with a somewhat supercilious assumption of exaggerated politeness*). Miss Rickett! I am overwhelmed.

ANN. How d' do? So you're the wonderful Mr. Clay we've been hearing s' much about?

WILFRED. You embarrass me. The honor is too great.

ANN. Yes, you look embarrassed, I must say. I'm the one that ought t' be "overwhelmed," I s'pose, at the great "honor." But I ain't. I've met folks from New York before.

JOHN. Why, Miss Rickett, I'm sure Mr. Clay ——

ANN (*going up c.*). So'm I—sure as I want t' be. I know when I'm bein' made fun of, and I know a real gentleman when I see one, too. Good-after-noon.

(*Exit ANN, D. F. to R., with great dignity, looking straight ahead, with her head up. JOHN goes up and looks after her, annoyed, but amused in spite of himself. WILFRED plainly shows his anger.*)

WILFRED. The idiot! I don't see how you endure such people.

JOHN. I don't, you know—or won't have to, much longer. But you mustn't mind Miss Rickett. She is one of our local characters.

WILFRED. Of course—she is beneath notice. Still —— I don't wonder you're glad you are going to get out of all this, and to take your charming sister to something better. (*He has gone up c., now looks off D. F. to R.*) Ah, there she is, with ——

JOHN (*going up, looking off*). With Dave Holden. I'll call her.

WILFRED. Looks quite like an attachment, eh? Rather determined-looking young fellow, too. What if ——?

JOHN. I'll break it off. Leave it to me. I don't intend to have my sister throw herself away on a common, ordinary farmer like him.

(*Exit JOHN, D. F. to L. WILFRED stands looking out, smiling and shrugging his shoulders. After slight pause, enter JOHN, with ROSE, who seems to come with him rather unwillingly, looking back and waving her hand.*)

ROSE (*calling*). Dave! Come on in ——

JOHN. Rose, dear, don't you know you shouldn't have stayed out there so long? Mr. Clay is our guest, and ——

ROSE. I know, but I was only talking to Dave. I

was asking him about —— Oh, John, is it really true that you want to sell the farm, and go away somewhere?

JOHN. Is that what Dave has been telling you? I would advise him to attend to his own affairs. He is altogether too much interested in what doesn't concern him. I'd rather you didn't have so much to do with him, Rose. He isn't in our—your—class.

ROSE. John! how can you say such a thing? Dave is my friend. I won't let you say such things about him. It isn't fair. (*Goes to door and calls off.*) Dave! Dave!

JOHN (*taking hold of her arm*). Come with me. I know what is for your good.

ROSE. Leave me alone. I'm going to see Dave.

JOHN. You are going to do nothing of the sort.

(*Enter JANE, R.*)

JANE. Come, children,—Mr. Clay. Dinner is ready.

(*Exit JANE, R. ROSE gets free from JOHN, who is part way down C., and goes up and meets DAVE, who enters D. F., pausing with an uncertain manner, as he notices that both JOHN and WILFRED ignore him. WILFRED is L. C., looking on, with an amused expression.*)

ROSE. Dave, I want you to stay to dinner ——

DAVE. Thanks, but I —— How are you, John? Glad to see you back.

JOHN. Thanks. I hope you are well. Come, Rose, dinner is served.

ROSE (*still hesitating*). But, John ——

JOHN (*leading ROSE to R.*). See you again, Dave. Come, Rose. Wilfred.

(*He leads ROSE to R.; she is compelled to go with him, though looking back at DAVE, appealingly. JOHN urges her on, and they go off R., followed by WILFRED, who looks back at DAVE with a slight sneer, half contemptuous, and with an air of*

HOME ACRES

triumph. DAVE at first seems perplexed, takes a step towards R., then, as the fact dawns upon him that he has been snubbed, shows chagrin, though only half in anger. Comes part way down C., looks off R., raises his eyebrows knowingly, tosses his head slightly, as if to say "Oh, well, my turn will come!" then goes up to D. F., looks back towards R., with a rather subdued smile and an air of forbearance. Exit, D. F. to L.)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—*Living-room or parlor of a New York apartment house, attractively and even elegantly, but not extravagantly furnished. Arched entrance to hall, across L. U. E., with door beyond to outer corridor; doors R. and L. Discover ENOCH, attired as a butler, standing L. C., in a rigid, pompous attitude, arms crooked, a serious, suffering expression on his face. LIB, in neat black costume of a maid, is R., looking at him and showing unrestrained mirth.*

LIB. If you ain't the limit. You look about as much like a butler as I do like—the Statoot o' Liberty. What you doin', standin' there like a stuffed pill'w, f'r, anyway?

ENOCH (*in a solemn tone, without changing his constrained posture*). Aw—shall I announce you, Madam?

LIB. Announce your grandmother. You give me a pain. Come, let 'er loose.

ENOCH (*changing to his natural self*). Whew! that's what I say. What do they want t' make me act like a darned fool for, anyway? I'd ruther hoe an acre o' 'taters 'n put on them lugs f'r ten minutes. Say, how much longer you think it 'll last?

LIB. What 'll last?

ENOCH. All this. It's costin' a heap o' money, and I don't see where it's all comin' from. That money John Whitman sold the farm for can't keep this up f'rever. It must be 'most gone now. If it ain't, that Clay feller 'n' the ones he's in with 'll soon have it all. He's a dead beat, if they ever was one.

LIB. Sure he is. I could tell that the minute I laid eyes on him. I know his kind—"Mud" his name 'd be, if I had my way. Got Mr. Whitman

right under his thumb, as easy as pie. Rose, too. Notice how she's fell f'r him?

ENOCH. Well, what's she goin' t' do? Where's Dave Holden, I'd like to know? Lettin' another feller have the hull show. I thought Dave was too much of a man f'r that. Makin' up to 'er the way he did, too.

LIB. Yes, 'n' it was him she'd 'a' took, if her brother hadn't canned him. Won't let him come here, as it looks t' me. Bet I would, though, if I was him. Never took him f'r such a piker.

ENOCH. Who—Dave Holden? He ain't. Don't you git that int' y're funny head, Frenchy.

LIB. Frenchy! Say, come off with that guff. "Lib" 's me name, even if I have got on a "Lizette" costumy. Look French, don't I? Oh, la! la! Whoops!

(She tosses her skirts and kicks up a heel, twirling to R., colliding with JANE, who enters R.)

JANE. Dear me, child, you really must be more careful and try to improve your manners. What would John say?

LIB. Aw, I don't care. Makes me tired, this "Lizette" business. And look at Enoch. Ain't he a freak? How much longer we got t' keep this up, Miss Whitman?

JANE. I don't know, Lib—I mean Lizette. It's John's idea, and I suppose we shall have to do as he says. Oh, how I long to be back at dear old Home Acres, where it was so peaceful and quiet. Everything seems to be hurry and pretense and confusion here, and it makes my head ache all the time. But I mustn't complain. I suppose John knows best.

ENOCH. I'm like you, Miss Whitman. Give me the farm, the pigs 'n' cows 'n' sech—as I was jest tellin' Lib here.

LIB. "Lizette," if you please, Monshure.

(Making an elaborate curtsy.)

ENOCH. Aw, go on ——

JANE. That will do, Enoch ——

ENOCH. “Higgins,” ma’am.

(*Resuming his stiff “butler” attitude.*)

LIB (*with a giggle*). Gosh!

JANE. I’m afraid you are hopeless, both of you—
and me, too, for that matter.

(*Enter ROSE, L.*)

ROSE. Hopeless, Auntie?

JANE. Yes, dear. I know I should call them “Higgins” and “Lizette,” as John wants me to, and try to treat them as if they were servants and I a grand lady, but—oh, I can’t remember, and it doesn’t seem natural—and my head aches so.

ROSE. I know. But it will be all right after a while, though I’m afraid John has undertaken an impossible task, trying to make a French maid and an English butler out of those two.

ENOCH. Right you are. Might’s well try t’ make a—
a—I d’ know what, out o’ me ——

LIB. That’s what you be—a “what?” Oh, ho!
Look at y’!

ENOCH. You ain’t got much on me y’self, Lizzie.

LIB. I’ll “Lizzie” y’!

JANE. Enoch—Lib ——

(*LIB chases ENOCH off R.*)

ROSE. You’re a pretty French maid, you are.

LIB. Thanks, Mam’selle. That’s what I think.

ROSE. You know what I mean. Where are all the fine manners John has been trying to teach you? Don’t forget, you are supposed to be French, and you must be gentle and refined.

LIB. Sure. Watch me. “Oui (*we*)—oui!” (*we*)—
“Us—us!”

(*Sings or hums refrain of gay tune, dances about, à la French danseuse; finally kicks up her heels and dashes off R.*)

JANE (*seated L.*). Dear me, I don't know what we are going to do with her. I'm afraid she is incorrigible. And poor Enoch—if ever a fish was out of water.

ROSE (*crossing and standing by JANE, with arm about her shoulder*). And aren't we, too, out of place? I begin to think I shall never make a city lady, such as John wants me to be. I don't seem to want to be one, somehow.

JANE. It's hard for you, too; but you are young and there must be a certain fascination in it all—the new surroundings, the gay companions, the theatres—but me, poor, countrified me, with a love for the old home that nothing can kill. Dear old Home Acres, I wonder if we shall ever see it again.

ROSE. I'm afraid not, now. It is sold, and here we are, apparently to stay.

JANE. And isn't it strange, Rose, that we cannot find out who bought the farm? John only tells me that it was sold to Matthew Culver, but he evidently bought it for somebody else, for Ann Rickett writes me that nobody lives there.

ROSE. I suppose Mr. Culver owns it and is holding it for a much bigger price than he paid for it. He's a speculator, you know.

JANE. Yes, and Ann heard that he bought it very cheap—much less than it really is worth—John seemed so anxious to sell. If he would only buy it back!

ROSE. He is too taken up with city life—thinks he is going to get rich here. He says everything looks promising.

JANE. I am frightened, Rose dear. He has had so little experience in such things. I know he trusts Mr. Clay and takes his advice, but—I can't help worrying.

ROSE. Well, then you just stop it. John has had more experience than you think, and will look out for himself and us, too. As for Mr. Clay—he seems to be very much of a gentleman—his

kind—and is nice to me, but—oh, Auntie, it doesn't seem just right about Dave. Does it?

JANE. No. I don't see why John should forbid your writing to him. Dave is one of the finest boys in the world and an old friend of ours, and it doesn't seem right to drop him the way we have. I must speak to John about it.

ROSE. It wouldn't do any good. He says Dave is a rough, crude country boy, and he wants me to look higher. Of course, I never—promised Dave, exactly; but—as you say, it isn't right to drop an old friend that way, and I am sure Dave feels it. He must wonder why I have never written to him.

JANE. Perhaps it is just as well, if you can give him no encouragement. I am sure he wants you, and I don't think you could find one who would be better or make you happier, but of course, if you don't love him ———

ROSE (*showing confusion*). I—I never said that—I ———

(*The door-bell rings.*)

JANE. I wonder who that is. Dear me, I get all in a tremble every time the bell rings or anything, for fear it's some of John's grand friends, and I ought to put on "society manners."

(*Enter ENOCH, R., with his "butler" air; crosses, exits*
L. U. E.)

ROSE. You mustn't feel that way, Auntie dear; your "ways" are better than those of any "society people" I have seen yet.

JANE. But you've seen so few. You're just trying to encourage me. I know. (*Enter ENOCH, L. U. E.*) Who is it, Eno—I mean Higgins?

ENOCH. It's that Clay feller—— (*Suddenly remembering his dignity.*) I mean Mr. Clay, and they's a girl—I mean lady—with him.

ROSE. It must be Helen Dalton. She's the one, Aunt

Jane, that John—the one he seems to think is so wonderful.

JANE. Oh, yes. You may ask them in, En—Higgins. Dear me, I never can remember.

(Exit ENOCH, L. U. E.)

ROSE. Now we must act our prettiest, I suppose. That wonderful Miss Dalton!

JANE. I'm all in a flutter. (*Going to R.*) I'll just go in the other room a few minutes first.

ROSE. But, Aunt Jane—— (*Exit JANE, R.*) Oh!—just me, all alone.

(*She goes up R., and is not at first noticed by WILFRED CLAY and HELEN DALTON, who enter L. U. E., followed by ENOCH, who has on his stiffest "butler" manner.*)

ENOCH (*looking about, but not seeing ROSE*). I'll go tell 'em—I mean, I'll "announce" y'.

(Exit ENOCH, R.)

HELEN DALTON. Oh, Wilfred, really—how funny! That low comedy butler. And I suppose——

WILFRED (*seeing ROSE*). Helen, here is—— (*ROSE comes down to R. C., shyly.*) Miss Whitman, let me introduce my friend, Helen Dalton.

HELEN (*with somewhat over-effusive politeness*). How do you do, Miss Whitman? I am so glad to meet you, at last.

ROSE. Thank you. (*Timidly, but not awkwardly, as she shakes hands with HELEN.*) I am glad to meet you, too, Miss Dalton.

HELEN. I've heard so much of you from John—Mr. Whitman. He is so proud of his little wild Rose.

WILFRED. Helen, now,—“wild.”

HELEN. Of course, I meant it as a compliment—“the sweet wild rose,” you know. I hope you are not offended, Miss Whitman?

ROSE. Of course not. Why should I be? I'm “Rose,” in name, at least, and I'm from the country, and not a bit ashamed of it.

WILFRED. I should say not, rather. And you are no longer a flower that is "born to blush unseen."

HELEN. No, indeed, for—see, she is blushing now.

WILFRED. And something to be proud of, too—to have real blushes, that didn't have to be bought.

HELEN. Wilfred! how can you? Don't you mind him, Miss Whitman—oh, I really must call you Rose, may I? (*ROSE smiles, somewhat abashed, with a slight nod of assent.*) Thanks. He's just a tease, you know, and not at all worth noticing.

WILFRED. I like that.

ROSE. I—I'm sorry my brother isn't home. I think he may be here very soon. I will call my aunt.

HELEN. Yes,—do.

(*Exit ROSE, R. HELEN, R. C., looks after her, smiling somewhat derisively. WILFRED is L.*)

WILFRED. Well, what do you think of her? Isn't she the sweet little country flower?

HELEN. "Country" is right. It's written all over her. But I suppose you mean to appropriate her, put her in your buttonhole, so to speak, for a while, and then cast her aside, as you have so many others. Well, it ought to be easy.

WILFRED. Sure. She's mine already.

HELEN. Be careful. The sweetest rose, even the innocent-looking one, hides a thorn, you know.

WILFRED. Leave that to me. I know how to prune them, my dear. But you have a little more difficult proposition on hand.

HELEN. Oh, you mean the brother—the handsome, stalwart young farmer lad. Pooh! he's a cinch. He fell for me the first time we met, and I've made some progress since, if you were to notice it.

WILFRED. And the poor boy doesn't even dream that he's being "vamped."

HELEN. Wilfred, don't. I hate that word. I'm not a "vamp," just because I use my feminine wiles to coax a perfectly willing man in my direction. Besides, I really like John Whitman. He may be

from the country, but he's a fine fellow, and nobody's fool.

WILFRED. Well! Behold the "vamp" being "vamped." What next?

HELEN. Honestly, Wilfred, sometimes I almost hate you. You're vile. I suppose I'm bad enough myself, to lend myself to your schemes, but—well, I've got to do something. I'm broke—my bills—I don't dare think of them. A few hundreds certainly would come in handy just now. You're sure he has it?

WILFRED. Plenty. Trust me for that. I persuaded him to sell that farm of his—cheap, too, as a certain friend of mine down-town could tell you——

HELEN. You mean Jim Ferguson.

WILFRED. What if I do? Jim's a good friend of mine and knows just how to manage things. You stick to us, little one, and you'll come out right. He expects to make a good profit on that deal. The farm's worth a lot more than he got it for, and—do you suppose that's all? Not by a long shot.

HELEN. What do you mean? You're going to get all he has.

WILFRED. You mean Ferguson is—all in the most natural way. John's crazy to invest his money—about ten thousand or so his father left him—and if we know a good thing to put it into—a "sure thing"—why, aren't we doing him a favor?

HELEN. One of Jim Ferguson's "sure things." Sure that he gets, and the other fellow loses.

WILFRED. Well, "such is life in a big city," you know. (*Glances R.*) Here they come. Remember your part, my dear.

HELEN. Oh, yes.

(*Enter ROSE and JANE, R.*)

ROSE. This is my aunt, Miss Whitman, Miss Dalton. Aunt Jane, Miss Dalton.

JANE. I'm very glad to meet you, Miss Dalton. How

do you do, Mr. Clay? You haven't been up to see us in quite a spell.

WILFRED. No, I've been pretty busy.

HELEN. I am pleased to meet you, Miss Whitman, I have heard so much about you. Wilfred has spoken of you so often, and your delightful hospitality at your charming home up in the country, last summer.

JANE. Home Acres, our old home.

HELEN. Home Acres. What a charming name, so suggestive of green fields and shady lanes, and brooks and apple orchards and all. I'm sure it is perfectly delightful. And you left it to come to New York to live?

JANE. Y-Yes, we—it was John's idea, you know. He thought it would be to his advantage, and of course Rose and I had to come along. I suppose—I hope—it will all be for the best.

WILFRED. Of course it will. John Whitman is destined to be a great man, a man of wealth and power. There was no chance for him in the country.

JANE. No—maybe not. But his father, and his grandfather—they were good men. Well off, too, and farmers. But I don't blame John, with his education and all.

WILFRED. That's the way to look at it, Miss Whitman. Isn't it, Rose? Excuse me—"Miss" Whitman. I hope you don't mind?

ROSE. Why, no, of course not. We're well enough acquainted for that, I guess, after all this time.

*(ROSE and WILFRED have gone to R., by themselves,
HELEN engaging the attention of JANE, L.)*

WILFRED. I'm glad you feel that way, because—well, I want you to like me. You do, don't you—a little bit?

ROSE. Why, yes. You're John's friend.

WILFRED. And yours, too.

ROSE. Of course. It would have been terribly lone-

some here in New York—lonesomer, I mean—if it hadn't been for you.

WILFRED. I—we—mean to show you such a good time you will love New York as much as we do.

ROSE. Perhaps—some time. I haven't seen so very much of it yet, you know.

WILFRED. Then you must start right in. You'll have to let me take you around a bit. May I?

ROSE. Y-Yes—if Aunt Jane ——

(Exeunt ROSE and WILFRED, R., in close conversation. HELEN glances around, sees they are gone, and smiles to herself, as she and JANE come down to C.)

HELEN. I suppose New York does seem somewhat strange and confusing to you, Miss Whitman. But you will soon get used to it, and like it, I am sure.

JANE. I don't know. I guess I'm too old-fashioned, too—well, “countrified,” I suppose you'd call it. The city seems so cruel, so heartless.

HELEN. Oh, my dear Miss Whitman, you mustn't say that. We have hearts here, only everything is different.

JANE. It was a great sorrow to me when John insisted on selling our old home. It was like tearing up old roots—heart-roots—to me, and I'm afraid I shan't stand it very long, transplanted into this cold, hard soil. I—I'm all in a muddle, sort of, still. But I'm talking too much. I hope you'll excuse me. It wasn't me you came to see.

HELEN. But it was you, too, though to be sure, it was Mr. Whitman we sought. I believe Wilfred—Mr. Clay—has some business appointment to arrange for him, and as he had left the office down-town, where we expected to find him, we came on up here.

JANE. I expect him any minute. *(She has gone up near L. U. E., now looks off.)* I believe this is him now. Yes, it is.

(Enter JOHN, L. U. E. *He shows pleasure upon seeing HELEN.*)

JOHN. Good-afternoon. This is a pleasant surprise. So you and Aunt Jane have become acquainted, Helen? That's nice.

HELEN. Yes, and already she has quite won my heart.

JANE. Now, Miss—a—dear me, I forget your name already.

JOHN. Miss Dalton.

HELEN. Helen.

JANE. Oh, yes, of course—Miss Dalton. You're too kind, my dear. And now—you'd like a cup of tea, maybe, and perhaps a bite. I'll go and see about it.

(Exit JANE in somewhat of a "flutter," R. HELEN and JOHN are R. C.)

HELEN. She's a dear old soul.

JOHN. Yes, indeed, as dear to me as my own mother could have been had she lived. You understand, of course—having always lived in the country, and ——

HELEN. No excuses for her, please. Such genuineness and real womanly charm are a treat. And that dear little sister of yours—a perfect treasure.

JOHN. You have met her?

HELEN. Yes. She and Wilfred are in there, now; spooning, I suppose.

JOHN. No, not Rose. She doesn't know how to "spoon," as we understand it.

HELEN. Well, I guess Wilfred Clay can teach her a thing or two.

JOHN. If I thought—but no, Wilfred is sincere.

HELEN. Certainly he is. That was only my flippant way of putting it. But she does need "bringing out," you know.

JOHN. Y-Yes, I suppose so. But, tell me, how did you happen to come way up here? I expected to meet you at Ferguson's office.

HELEN. We went there, but he said you had not shown up, or 'phoned or anything, so we skipped into the subway and came up here. Haven't you seen him?

JOHN. Yes, you had no more than left when I got there. He came up with me—is out there. I didn't like to take such an important step without consulting my aunt and Rose. It is partly Rose's 'money, you know. At least, I would need hers, too, and Aunt Jane must give her consent.

HELEN. So that's it? I supposed you were your own boss?

JOHN. So I am. But Ferguson's deal requires more capital than I can put up myself. It's quite an undertaking, you know, but Wilfred says it's sure to succeed and make me a rich man.

HELEN. Then it is. If he recommends Ferguson and advises you to go into it, you may be sure it's all right. Wilfred's putting his own money into it, and I, too—my pittance. That mine is sure to yield enough to make us all rich. So Wilfred says—and he knows.

JOHN. Well, well, what a little business woman it is. Who would have thought that pretty head ——?

HELEN. No, I'm not. It is Wilfred who has helped and advised me, and who is doing the same for you.

JOHN. Yes, I know; he is a real friend. And—if it does turn out as we expect—if I get a start—then, Helen—may I hope?

HELEN. To be a rich man? Indeed you may.

JOHN. Yes, but more than in money—in winning you. It's you I want, Helen—you!

HELEN. And you think me so mercenary that you must be rich first. Oh, John!

JOHN. Helen!

(He is about to embrace her when LIB enters suddenly, R.; stops, with a stifled exclamation, clapping her hand over her mouth. They turn, seeing her. JOHN is annoyed, HELEN only smiling.)

JOHN. Lib! Where did you come from?

LIB. Say, what you "Libbin'" me fer? 'Twas you said I was t' be "Lizette."

JOHN. That will do. (*Motioning toward L. U. E.*)
There's a gentleman out there. Go and show him in.

LIB. We, we, Monshure. Sure thing.

(*Exit LIB, L. U. E.*)

HELEN. Is that the "French maid"?

JOHN. Please don't laugh, Helen. It's not so funny to me.

HELEN. But that one—and the butler! Why not the real thing?

JOHN. They will come—later.

(*Enter L. U. E., JIM FERGUSON, who is well dressed, and with more or less success assumes the air of a real gentleman, though his own coarseness—even "toughness"—at times shows beneath his superficial veneer.*)

JIM FERGUSON (*as he comes down to C.; JOHN is R. C., HELEN, R.*). Ah, good-afternoon, Mr. Whitman. How d' do, Miss Dalton? Didn't know you was here.

HELEN. Yes, we came up-town a few minutes ago, Mr. Clay and I. I will tell him you have arrived.

JOHN. Thank you, Helen. In the library, I think.

HELEN (*going up R.*). I know.

(*Exit HELEN, R. JOHN motions FERGUSON to a seat, L.*)

JOHN. Sit down, Mr. Ferguson. Clay will be right in, then we can talk things over. I hope everything is all right.

FERGUSON (*sitting L.*). Couldn't be better. Got fine reports, only this morning. Best investment ever. Good as gold.

JOHN. I'm taking the advice of my friend, Mr. Clay, you know. I think I can trust him implicitly.

FERGUSON. Rather. Fine fellow, Clay. Perfect gentleman. Putting his own money into it, you know. Guess that shows.

JOHN (*he is also sitting, R. C.*). I feel sure it does, or I wouldn't care to risk it. Not only my own money, you know, Mr. Ferguson, but what my sister has also. She is not of age, and, as my aunt is her guardian, according to my father's will, her consent is necessary.

FERGUSON. Sure. But women don't understand such things. What's the use of explaining too much?

JOHN. I have never deceived her. I couldn't do that.

FERGUSON. Course not. Wouldn't want y' to. Just a little diplomacy. Suppose you leave it to me. I can manage it. All it needs is for her to sign a paper, and it'll be O. K. I'll fix that, if you'll leave her to me a few minutes.

JOHN. But—I'm not sure—you see, if ——

FERGUSON. Oh, well, of course—if you don't want to risk it. Plenty of others. We only wanted t' let you in on a good thing. One chance in a million, but—it's up t' you.

JOHN. I have decided—on Mr. Clay's advice. I will call my aunt. (*He is about to go R., when LIB enters, L. U. E.*) Lizette, tell Miss Whitman I wish to see her, here.

LIB (*crossing to R., with a searching look at FERGUSON*). Sure—I mean “we, we.”

(*She goes to R., but pauses, still looking at FERGUSON, screwing up her eyes and glaring at him keenly. He has taken from his pocket a legal-looking paper, which he is examining, not noticing her.*)

JOHN. Well, why don't you do as I told you?

LIB. Sure I will.

(*Exit LIB, R., looking back at FERGUSON.*)

FERGUSON. It's all right here. All we have to do is to get your aunt to sign her name. That gives you authority to arrange the whole matter, with

my assistance, you know. It's going to be a lucky strike for you, my boy. The chance of a lifetime.

JOHN (*going L.*). I have a little private room in here, a sort of den. Suppose you go in there, and I will send my aunt to you.

FERGUSON. Just as you say.

(JOHN *shows* FERGUSON *off L.*; *following him.* Enter JANE and LIB, R.)

JANE. I thought you said John was here, Lib,—that he wanted to see me.

LIB. He was and he did. (*Motioning L.*) Guess they're in there. But I want to put you wise to that guy, Miss Whitman.

JANE. "Wise"—"guy"? What sort of talk is that? What do you mean?

LIB. I mean that one that's in there with 'im. I don't like his looks. I've seen his kind b'fore. He's a slick one all right—a bunco-steerer, or I'll eat m' new Sunday suit.

JANE. Of all things! What under the sun are you talking about?

LIB. That guy in there, that's up to some shyster business. Don't y' s'pose I know a thing 'r two? I've seen a few bums that dress up and try t' pass 'emself off as big ones. Don't you have nothin' t' do with that one, even if that blessed John of yours ———

JANE. Lib! how dare you? That's quite enough. I have implicit faith in my nephew and shall do as he says.

LIB. Oh,—all right. (*The door-bell rings, off L. U. E.*) I didn't mean t' butt in.

JANE. Such language! I thought you were improving.

(*Enter ENOCH, R., crossing.*)

LIB. Hey, old slow-poke, it's about time you answered some bells 'r somethin'.

ENOCH. Mind y'r own business, Frenchy.

(LIB dashes at him, but is hindered by JANE. Exit ENOCH, L. U. E.)

JANE. Child! will you never learn to act like a lady?

LIB. I guess not—a “French” one. La, la!

(JANE shakes her head, despairingly. She is R., LIB, U. L., looking off. ENOCH enters suddenly, much excited, colliding with LIB, who gives him a push.)

ENOCH. Who d’ you s’pose ’tis?

LIB. King o’ Chiny ’n’ all his queens.

ENOCH. Naw. More’n that. Oh, Miss Whitman, who d’ you s’pose?

JANE. Why, Enoch, I don’t know. Who—what do you mean?

ENOCH (almost too excited to talk). It’s—it’s ——

(Enter in a rush, L. U. E., ANN RICKETT. She carries a bag and several packages, which she thrusts into ENOCH’S arms, as she comes down. ENOCH drops several of them, LIB picks up one or two, but drops them again as she recognizes ANN.)

ANN. Miss Whitman! Here I am. Don’t you know me?

JANE. Ann—Rickett! Is it you?

ANN. What’s left of me, and I guess that ain’t more’n a remnant. Of all the pullin’ and haulin’ and pushin’ and crowdin’! My goodness, I never was so glad of anything as I was t’ get out of that hole in the ground where they take you in that train. I was afraid of my life. And such a trip! I thought we—I—would never get here. Ain’t you glad to see me?

JANE. Glad? Oh, Ann!

(JANE, who seems just recovering from her surprise, now seizes ANN’S hand and shakes it cordially.)

ANN. I thought y’ would be. My, you’re looking all dragged out. I don’t believe it agrees with you here.

JANE. I'm all right, and seeing you will be as good as a tonic. But I never! Such a surprise. When did you leave Chesterville, and how did you happen to come way down here to New York, and how did you ever find the way? I declare, I'm so glad to see you I could cry.

(She sinks into chair, R. C., almost overcome.)

ANN. Then do. It would do y' good.

(ENOCH and LIB, up R. C., have been looking on, showing signs of great interest.)

ENOCH. And how's everything on the old farm?

LIB. Is the grass still green and the brook still wet?

ANN. Land, Miss Whitman, what have you done to 'em? They look like the comic pictures in the Sunday paper.

JANE. M'm—well, you see, it was John's idea. They're our "butler" and "French maid."

ENOCH *(with a stiff bow)*. Higgins.

LIB *(with a curtsey)*. And Lizette.

ANN. Of all things! So that's what New York's done to y'? It's even worse 'n I expected. I hope it don't effect me that way.

JANE. Sit down, Ann. You must be tired. *(To ENOCH and LIB.)* You take her things in the other room, till I arrange where to put her. I suppose you're going to make us a good visit?

(ENOCH and LIB gather up ANN's satchel and bundles. She goes and takes one of the bundles.)

ANN. I'll take this one.

(Exeunt ENOCH and LIB, R., with articles, laughing, etc.)

JANE. Now tell me, how is everything, and everybody? *(They sit.)*

ANN. About the same. Of course, your place isn't though, with you gone.

JANE. Dear old Home Acres. Don't you know yet who bought it?

ANN. No. They's a man and his wife live there, and that old Matt Culver seems to have something to do with it. It's kept up all right, but—oh, dear, it needs you, Miss Whitman.

JANE (*wiping her eyes*). And I need Home Acres. Oh, Ann, it's killing me here. I'm afraid—frightened——

ANN. I wouldn't worry. It may all be for the best, after all. It must be, some way. I wouldn't give up to it. Here's a few little things I brung you, in this bundle. I thought they might taste good—like home, sort of.

JANE. Oh, Ann, what is it?

ANN. Just a few things—a can o' my apple-butter, some o' my carraway cookies, an apple 'r two, and a few little things like that. I told Dave I thought they might seem good.

JANE. How is Dave? How I would like to see him.

ANN. Well, you can. That's another thing I brung—him.

JANE. You—he's here, too—Dave Holden?

ANN. Of course he is. That's one thing made Enoch so excited. He's out there, waitin' to s'prise you. Shall I call him in?

JANE. And you didn't tell me. Dave—Dave——

(She has risen, goes up to L. U. E., just as DAVE enters; meets him, fairly "fluttering" with excitement, grasping both his hands. They come down c.)

DAVE. Miss Whitman! How are you?

JANE. Oh, Dave! I—I'm so glad to see you. You look just like the country—no, I don't mean that, of course, but——

DAVE. I know what you mean, Miss Whitman. We just thought we'd give you a little surprise, Miss Rickett and I. I had been planning to come to New York for a long time, and as she wanted to come, why, I helped her along.

ANN. And it's a good thing he did, or I guess I'd 'a'

been kidnapped and run over and blowed up and everything else, by this time. Of all places, this is like all the places I ever saw 'r heard about shook and jumpled up t'gether. My head won't stop buzzin' around for six months. But where's Rose, and John, and how are they?

JANE. They are well, and—Rose is in there with—she has some company just now.

ANN. Some of her new city friends, I suppose.

JANE. Mr. Clay. You remember him.

ANN. I guess I do. So he's hangin' around?

DAVE. Clay.

JANE. Yes, Dave, but—I don't think she really cares for him, in her heart—but John—oh, I have been so miserable, so unhappy. My whole life is changed—I don't see anything left to live for.

DAVE. It can't be so bad as that, Miss Whitman. There's always hope.

ANN. Sure. It's always darkest just before the sun comes up, y' know.

(*Enter JOHN, L.*)

JANE (*rising*). Here's John now. John, see who's here.

JOHN (*greatly surprised, not particularly pleased, but with some cordiality*). Why, if it isn't—Miss Rickett—Dave. This is quite a surprise.

(*They shake hands.*)

DAVE. I suppose it is, John. I had to come to New York on a little business, and Miss Rickett thought she'd come along.

JOHN. "Business"—in New York,—you?

DAVE. Strange, isn't it? But don't worry, it won't keep me here long.

JANE. Why, John, I'm sure ——

JOHN. I didn't mean—but I didn't know you had any business interests here, Dave.

DAVE. You're not the only Chesterville boy who can branch out. Where is Rose? I'd like to see her.

JANE. Of course. And she will be delighted. I'll call her.

JOHN. Just a minute, Aunt Jane. Perhaps Dave and Miss Rickett would be willing to go in the library for the present. I wish to speak to you. (*To the others.*) If you will excuse us?

DAVE. Certainly.

JOHN. Will you show them, Aunt Jane, and then come back for a minute?

JANE. Yes. Right in here, Dave. Ann.

ANN. Come on, Dave, us country folks 'll have to take a back seat here in the city, I suppose.

JANE. Now, Ann —

ANN. Oh, I ain't mad 'r anything, but I don't have t' be hinted at twice. I hope you won't be long, though, Miss Whitman, 'cause I've got so much news to tell y', about Chesterville 'n' all, 't I'm as full of news as a tick is of feathers, as you might say.

(*Exit JANE, explaining to ANN, who follows her off R.*)

JOHN. Seems as much inclined as ever to speak her own mind, doesn't she?

DAVE. Well, I guess you know Ann Rickett.

JOHN. Certainly. Not worth noticing. She didn't even let us know she was coming, so far as I know.

DAVE. Guess it was too sudden. She heard I was coming and wanted to come with me. I imagine your aunt is glad to see her, anyway.

JOHN. No doubt. Aunt Jane will never be weaned away from the country, I'm afraid.

DAVE. As you have been, I see, John. I don't suppose we'll ever see much more of you in Chester-ville.

JOHN. No. New York is a little more to my liking. My sister and I are of one mind there.

DAVE. So Rose likes it here, too?

JOHN. Rather. She is getting to be a real little city lady. It was in her, you know.

DAVE. It's a true heart that's in her, John—a noble nature—and they tell anywhere.

(Goes R.; JOHN looks after him, with a faint smile, going to L. As DAVE reaches R., ROSE enters and he pauses.)

ROSE. Oh, Dave, is it really you? I am so glad to see you.

(She shakes hands very cordially with DAVE. JOHN, at L., glances at them, shrugs his shoulders, then exits, L.)

DAVE. And I can't say how glad I am to see you. Let me look at you—good.

(They sit on sofa, L., and he looks searchingly at her.)

ROSE. Don't I look just the same, Dave? I didn't mean to change.

DAVE. I hope you haven't changed enough to go back on your old friends. It began to look that way.

ROSE. It wasn't because I didn't think of you, Dave. I meant to write—I wanted to—but John——

DAVE. I thought that was it—John. He wants you to follow his example, I suppose. I'm not much of a man, compared with some of the fine New York "gentlemen" he knows.

ROSE. Dave, don't. You hurt me.

DAVE. Forgive me. I didn't mean to do that. But you must acknowledge, it has been pretty hard for me—hard to understand.

ROSE. Yes, I know. And hard for me, too.

DAVE. Rose!

(He seems about to lose control of himself, grasping her hand, but desists as JANE enters, R. ROSE rises; also DAVE.)

JANE. Isn't it fine to see Dave again, Rose? But I thought John was here. He wanted to see me.

DAVE. I think he is in there, Miss Whitman.

(*Motions L.*)

JANE. Yes, with that man. It's a little matter of business of some kind, I believe. Some paper he wants me to sign.

DAVE. A paper, Miss Whitman? For you to sign?

JANE. Yes. I don't know just what, but I know it's all right or John wouldn't tell me to do it. You two run along, and I'll soon be through and we'll have something to eat. Go in where Ann is.

ROSE. Mr. Clay and Miss Dalton, too. Come and meet them, Dave.

DAVE. You go, Rose, and I'll follow in a minute. I want to speak to Miss Whitman first.

ROSE. Don't be long.

(*Exit ROSE, R. DAVE and JANE are C.*)

JANE. You have something to tell me, Dave? About the old place? Do you know ——

DAVE. No. It's this, Miss Whitman—do you know what paper it is you are to sign, what it is for?

JANE. Why, no, not exactly. But John is going into some business of some sort—an investment, I believe—oh, it's all right, Dave. It's something Mr. Clay knows all about and—I'm just to put my name down as a witness or something.

DAVE. If you'll take my advice, Miss Whitman, you won't sign it; not without knowing just what you are doing. You may be sorry afterwards.

JANE. Why, Dave! Don't you think I trust John?

DAVE. Y-Yes, of course, but ——

(*Enter JOHN, L.*)

JOHN. I thought you were coming, Aunt Jane. Mr. Ferguson hasn't much time.

JANE. I was just coming, John. You see, I hadn't seen Dave in so long ——

JOHN. I think he will excuse you. Come.

DAVE. Wait a minute, please. Your aunt tells me,

John, that you wish her to sign some paper. She doesn't even know what it is, or what it means. Do you think you ought to expect her to do that?

JOHN. What is that to you?

DAVE. It is enough to me, as an old friend—of hers, if not of yours. And so much a friend of your sister, John, that I hope—I expect—to make her my wife.

JOHN. Oh, you do? Then you are doomed to disappointment. My sister has other plans.

DAVE. You have other plans for her, you mean. It will be for her to decide that.

JOHN. She has decided, and so have I. I've decided that I shall put up with no more of your interference. It's not the first time you have intruded in my affairs, Dave Holden, but I warn you that it had better be the last.

JANE. Why, John—Dave ——

(Enter ROSE, R., just in time to hear the above, pausing R., unnoticed and showing dismay. She is followed by ANN, who also stands up R.)

JOHN. Then let him understand that he was not invited here, and that he is not wanted. Do you mean to take his word or mine?

JANE. Why, John dear, what do you mean?

JOHN. Will you do as I want you to do, or will you let this country friend of yours dictate to you?

DAVE. Yes, her friend—a real one—and from the country. Miss Whitman, you understand. You believe in me?

JANE. Of course, Dave—of course I do—but if John says ——

JOHN. I say we have had enough of this. Come, Aunt Jane—show him that he cannot run this family. *(Calling off L.)* Ferguson!

(ROSE, coming down, for the first time seen by JOHN, DAVE and JANE.)

ROSE. John! What is it? What is the matter?

HOME ACRES

JOHN. It means, Rose, that this man, Dave Holden, says you have promised to be his wife. Is that true?

ROSE. Why, John—Dave—I ——

DAVE. Isn't it true, Rose? Won't you make it true?

(She hesitates, looking appealingly at JOHN, who scowls at her, warningly. She turns sadly from DAVE, to ANN, who comes down, putting an arm about her.)

ANN. John Whitman, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. If you ain't, I'm ashamed of you. It's a sin and a shame, if I do say so—trying to make your own sister marry one man when she loves another.

JANE. Ann!

ANN. I don't care. New York has gone to his head. He'd sacrifice his own sister, and you, too. It's time somebody told him a thing or two, and I'll speak my mind if he turns me out of the house for it.

(Enter WILFRED and HELEN, R.; they stand up R., looking on, very much interested. JOHN is L., JANE, C., ANN and ROSE, R. C.)

JOHN *(ignoring ANN)*. Are you ready to do as I wish, Aunt Jane?

JANE. Yes, John.

(Enter FERGUSON, L.)

JOHN. Have you the paper, Mr. Ferguson?

FERGUSON *(taking paper from pocket)*. Sure. Right here.

JOHN *(taking paper, opening it)*. You have only to sign your name, Aunt Jane.

FERGUSON *(producing fountain pen, ready for use)*. Right here, ma'am—on that line.

JANE. I know it must be all right, John, if you say so—of course.

(She is about to sign paper, at table, L. C.)

HOME ACRES

ANN. Do you know what's in it, Miss Whitman—before you sign it?

DAVE (*coming to L.*). No, she doesn't, and I advise her not to sign it.

JOHN. And once more I advise you to mind your own business.

(*JANE starts to sign paper; DAVE goes to her, as if to restrain her.*)

DAVE. Miss Whitman—think ——

JOHN (*taking firm hold of DAVE and pushing him back*). Go—get out ——

ROSE (*crossing to DAVE, but intercepted by JOHN*). John ——

ANN (*again comforting ROSE, who turns to her, overcome*). You ought to be ashamed of yourself, John Whitman. You are making a pig-headed fool of yourself, if I do say so ——

JOHN. Ha! you! (*He sneers at her, then turns again to JANE.*) Now.

(*He goes to table, opening paper and spreading it out; FERGUSON gives JANE the pen; she takes it, tremblingly, hesitates, but is prompted by JOHN, and slowly writes her name on line indicated by FERGUSON, who smiles to himself, with half-concealed triumph.*)

DAVE. I think you will regret this day, John Whitman. When you do, remember that I tried to be your friend—and theirs.

(*He starts up C., with an appealing glance at ROSE, who is about to go to him, but is again hindered by JOHN, who steps between them. JANE, as if in a daze, looks on, goes over and takes ROSE in her arms.*)

JANE. What does it mean? Oh, John—Dave—my boys!

(*Exit DAVE, L. U. E.*)

(ROSE buries her head on JANE'S shoulder, sobbing; they stand C.; ANN, R. C., glaring at JOHN indignantly. WILFRED and HELEN, still standing up R., look on with half-amused and satisfied expression. JOHN is L. C., turned partly from the others, his face and attitude denoting triumph, not unmarked by a trace of doubt. FERGUSON, L., smiles knowingly, as he folds the paper and puts it in his inside coat pocket.)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—*Same as ACT I, on evening early in the following March. The doors are closed and curtains drawn across window. Discover ANN RICKETT, seated by table, R., knitting. After slight pause, enter ENOCH, D. F., well wrapped up, with cap pulled down over ears and tippet wound about neck. He has an armful of firewood; his cap and shoulders are covered with snow. He crosses to L. C., where he pauses as ANN speaks.*

ANN. Snowin', ain't it, Enoch?

ENOCH. I should say 'tis, t' beat the band. Looks like a reg'lar blizzard comin' on.

ANN. My sakes, does it? I hope they don't get snowed in, on the way from Thurman. Ben Weaver took his big sled and team, but if the roads drift the way they do sometimes. *(She rises, goes to window in F., raising curtain. Snow is seen falling thickly outside.)* My, it is! You goin' t' make up a fire in the front room, Enoch?

ENOCH. Yes, ma'am. He told me to. I'm goin' t' start it right away.

ANN. All right, I would. A good one, too, 'cause they'll be chilled through when they get here. I declare, it seems like a dream, don't it? I can't hardly believe it's true.

ENOCH. Nor me neither, Miss Rickett. Gosh, won't they be s'prised?

ANN. S'prised? I d' know how Miss Whitman'll stand it. And jest think, she ain't got the least idee. But for goodness' sake, Enoch, don't stand there holdin' that wood. Your arm'll break.

ENOCH. Wal, it is gittin' kind o' heavy. Guess I'd better go 'n' start that fire.

(Exit ENOCH, L. ANN, again seated, knits, rocks and sings softly to herself. There is a pause, then LIB puts her head in, R.)

LIB. Say, Miss Rickett, come 'n' see 'f I've got enough frostin' on this cake.

ANN. My goodness, be you jest frostin' that cake? It'll never get hard in time for 'em t' eat it.

LIB (*entering. She has on a large apron, and she holds a spoon, which is sticky with icing for a cake*). Then I reckon it'll be good 'n' sticky. 'F not, I can go out 'n' get some real frost. Plenty of that, outdoors.

ANN. I guess you needn't bother. It'll have to do. How does it seem, Lib—I mean “Lizette”—bein' back on the old farm?

LIB. Say, don't y' “Lizette” me. I had enough o' that French business. I'm glad enough t' be jest plain Lib again, now 't I'm back here. Gee, I never thought I'd be glad t' leave little old New York and come back to this backwoods dump ——

ANN. Such talk! I guess Chesterville ain't a “dump.” You're as much of a heathen as ever, if I do say so. I hoped all you'd been through ——

LIB. We ain't through yet. The best part's to come, if I get my guess. Say, but didn't that Mr. Mud get it in the neck?

ANN. “Mud?” Oh, you mean Clay. Well, it serves him right. But it was pretty hard on John Whitman 'n' his aunt 'n' sister. It almost killed them—leastwise it did Miss Whitman. I expect she's jest about done for, poor soul. It'll be like heaven to her t' get back to Home Acres.

LIB. Huh! Funny kind o' heaven, this place. But I guess they's worse. And, say, when John finds out who's here waitin' for him ——

ANN. John?

LIB. Oh, well, “Mr.” Whitman, then. Where is she?

ANN. Up-stairs. She's gett'n' all fixed up. I've got on my new dress, too. (*Rising.*) How d'you like it? (*Turns about for inspection.*)

LIB. Swell. Guess Mis' Vanderasterbilt ain't got nothin' on you. You look like thirty cents—I mean dollars.

ANN. You impudent thing! You'd better go 'n' finish frostin' that cake 'n' see 'f you can't find a few manners somewheres.

LIB. S'pose I had. I don't see any layin' around loose in this room.

ANN. That'll do. Go on.

(Enter ENOCH L.)

ENOCH. Hello, Lizette. Bon sour.

LIB. Oh, shut up, y' fresh thing! I guess I made a better French maid than you did English butler. You!—ha—"Hig-gins!"

ENOCH (*crossing to her*). Hey, I'll make you pay for that.

(*He attempts to kiss her. She slaps him and runs off R.*)

ANN. Well, of all things! Shinin' up to her, be y'?

ENOCH. Sort of. I didn't manage t' git very brilliant yet, but she's b'gun t' fan the flame, so I guess it'll flare up in time. 'Tain't quite s' easy startin' a fire in a gal's buzzum as 'tis in the wood-stove.

ANN. Well, of all things! If you ain't gett'n' poetic. I s'pose that's what New York done to y'.

ENOCH. Done more'n that. Wait till y' see my new suit. I guess me 'n' Lib'll s'prise 'em. We saved up 'n' bought 'em jest b'fore we come away, 'n' never told a soul. Guess mebbe they'll do t' git married in, 'f they keep that long.

ANN. Good land, you fight hard enough as 'tis. What's th' use gett'n' married?

ENOCH. Oh, jest so's t' have it legalized.

ANN. Of all things! You p'posed to her yet?

ENOCH. N-no, not 'xactly. She won't give me a chance. I sort o' brooched the subjec', that night I took her to the Hippydrome 'n' bought her a lunch int' Childses' afterwards, but she said if that was what I spread m'self so f'r, I'd better go 'n' do a "Steve Brodie," whatever that is.

ANN. Land, I don't know half she's talkin' about sometimes. She might's well be talking Greek 'r

Hindoo, as that New York lingo o' hers. But I guess you'd better be doin' the rest o' your chores, 'n' then go up and put on that wonderful new suit o' yours. Tell Lib t' hurry, too.

ENOCH. All right. We'll both git a hustle on.

ANN. You'd better, 'cause they're liable t' be here almost any time now. That is, if the roads ain't drifted too bad.

(Exit ENOCH R. ANN goes up and again lifts curtain, looking out, and disclosing snow still thickly falling. There is a knock on D. F. ANN drops curtain, goes and opens door, admitting DAVE. He wears heavy overcoat and a cap, which are white with snow.)

DAVE. Good-evening, Miss Rickett.

ANN. Good-evening, Dave. You **didn't** need to knock. Isn't this your ——

DAVE. Sh! don't say that. It isn't.

(ANN comes down to L. C.; DAVE removes coat and cap, shaking snow from them; places them on chair, or hangs them, up R.)

ANN. Oh, Dave, it's wonderful. You're the best man that ever lived, if I do say so ——

DAVE *(coming down to R. C.)*. Hold up. *(Making motion with hand, as if to push her away.)* I'm nothing of the sort. I'm the most selfish, calculating man in the world, that's what I am.

ANN. Why, Dave Holden!

DAVE. I am. Haven't I done it all for my own sake ——with my own happiness in view? Didn't I plan and contrive, and work an underhanded scheme to get things into my own hands?

ANN. And what if you did? It was the best thing a man ever done, and you know it. And if Rose Whitman ——

DAVE. Now, now!

ANN. Well, I don't care. I'll say what I think and you can't stop me. Jest t' think the way you

planned it all out from the very start, even b'fore they went away, and bought this farm yourself and never let anybody know it. And then in New York there, the way you made that Clay fell'w come t' time, and showed him up for what he was. Even after Miss Whitman signed that paper ——

DAVE. Now, Ann, see here. I'm not going to let you say another word. It didn't take a very smart man to upset that little scheme. I found out what Ferguson was, and when I faced him with his past record and threatened to prosecute him, why—with his picture in the Rogues' Gallery and the police on his trail—I didn't have much trouble making him destroy that paper, and he was mighty glad to clear out. As for Clay—when he saw the jig was up, he soon made himself scarce too.

ANN. But just think what a narrow escape Rose had. Why, John almost made her marry him.

DAVE. Clay was only using her as a tool. He would have thrown her over, as he has plenty of others as soon as they were of no use to him. Poor little Rose, it has been a sad experience for her. And Miss Whitman—dear soul! I hope she will be happy once more when she gets back here to her dear old Home Acres. It will be worth it all, just to see her when she finds out.

ANN. I guess it will. Happy? She'll think she's died 'n' gone to heaven, almost, if I do say so. As f'r Rose—well, I guess you'll have something to say about her happiness—and your own, too, when it comes to that.

DAVE. Sure. Didn't I tell you I was working with a selfish end?

ANN. They ain't a selfish bone in your body, Dave Holden, 'n' you know it ——

DAVE. Miss Rickett! You make too much of what I did. To be sure, I bought Home Acres, to save it from the sharks, but it was a good investment—especially if I get Rose with it.

ANN. Huh! You mean to let John Whitman have it back again, you know you do.

DAVE. M'm—well, wouldn't it be all in the family? No, you can't make a hero of me, Ann Rickett, so you might as well stop trying. Besides, look at the help I had, when it came to unmasking Clay and getting the best of that Ferguson gang.

ANN. Help? Oh, you mean Miss Dalton. I suppose she did. That certainly was a surprise, the way she turned. But I guess love had something to do with that, when you come right down to it.

DAVE. I guess it did. They say love is blind, but sometimes it seems to act as an eye-opener as well. It did in her case. When she saw that she was helping to bring about John's ruin, after she had encouraged him—why, she began to realize that she really cared for him.

ANN. Well, she made a pretty good bluff at being one of them vamp-things, if I do say so. It doesn't seem possible now that she's the same person. (*Turns and sees HELEN, who enters R.*) Here she is now.

HELEN (*handsomely attired in evening dress, and much subdued and more sympathetic in manner.*) You were talking about me, I know you were. But I deserve it, no matter how bad it was.

ANN. But it happens it wasn't bad, this time —

HELEN (*smiling*). "This time."

ANN. Well, I didn't jest exactly mean —

HELEN. I know. Don't you worry, Miss Rickett. Say all the bad things you can about me—as I was—only give me a chance to do better, and to win your good opinion. You will, won't you?

ANN. Of course I will. After the way you've turned out—well, I'll believe 'most anything's possible.

DAVE. Worse and worse, Miss Rickett. I think you'd better let it rest at that.

ANN. Mebbe I had. And in the meantime, I'll go and see to that supper, and try and get Lib fixed up a little. There's some more "love" business—her 'n' Enoch.

HELEN. Indeed!

ANN (R.). 'T's what it looks like. It seems to be in

the air. I declare, I guess I'd better be careful, or I'll be ketching it m'self.

(*Exit ANN, R.; DAVE C., HELEN L. C.*)

HELEN. Doesn't it all seem strange, Mr. Holden—wonderful? I can hardly believe my senses. It seems as if I was in another world.

DAVE. I guess you are. Chesterville isn't much like New York. But it certainly is wonderful to see you here. I don't believe John Whitman will be able to believe his senses when he sees you.

HELEN. Poor fellow, what a terrible ordeal he has been through. How he must be suffering now. It was hard, it seems cruel, in a way, to have kept the truth from him, to let him still think that he is ruined, his old home sold, all his money lost—Oh, what a joy it will be when he gets here, finds Home Acres waiting for him——

DAVE. And you in it, waiting for him, too. Won't it be worth the added suffering when he learns the truth? I know it seemed cruel to him, and to Miss Whitman and Rose, too, but I couldn't help wanting to have the joy of giving them the great surprise.

HELEN. I know, and I don't blame you. (*Going up C.*) Isn't it nearly time for them to be here?

DAVE. Yes, unless they are delayed by the storm. It's snowing hard, and has been for the past hour, and they may be a little slow in getting up from Thurman. But Ben Weaver's horses are pretty good, so I guess he'll get them here before long. I'm beginning to get scared. I'm afraid to go through with it, almost.

HELEN (*again coming down*). I know. But don't worry; "joy never kills." Remember, they are not to know I am here. I'm to appear as the grand climax. I seem to flatter myself I'm the "big act"—forgive me, that slipped out. It's hard to shake all your old habits, you know. But you understand, don't you, Mr. Holden?

DAVE. I would, if you'd drop that pesky "Mister" and call me ——

HELEN. "Dave." Then I will, with pleasure—if you make it "Helen" with me.

DAVE. Sure I will, Helen. Shake!

(They shake hands, cordially. Sleigh-bells are heard outside, in the distance.)

HELEN. Listen.

DAVE. Sleigh-bells. They're coming.

HELEN. Are they? Then I must go up-stairs.

DAVE. Yes, and I—I don't know where to go nor what to do, I'm so excited. I feel as if I'd turned horse thief, or committed murder or something.

HELEN. The idea! When what you've done is to prove yourself one man in a million ——

DAVE. You, too. Oh, hush up! I can't stand any more.

(Enter ANN, R., in great excitement.)

ANN. I hear bells. They're comin'. Oh, Dave, that's them—they're comin'!

DAVE. Yes, I know, Miss Rickett; I hear 'em too. *(Running about, as if not knowing what he is doing.)* I—you'll have to let them in. I'll go and hide a while.

HELEN. And I'm going up-stairs.

ANN. For the land's sake! I thought you had more sense, Dave Holden. You act like you was crazy, if I do say so.

DAVE. I don't know but I am. Anyhow, I feel so funny I don't know whether I'm standing on my feet or my head.

(HELEN has gone off R. DAVE goes up to window, lifts curtain cautiously and peeps out.)

ANN. They ain't here yet, them bells are quite a ways off. 'S fur as the Methodist church, I reckon.

(The bells are still heard, coming nearer and nearer.)

DAVE. Yes, but they're getting closer every minute.
Oh, Miss Rickett, what shall I do?

ANN. Do? Act like a sane human being, if you can.
You go out in the kitchen a while, and I'll receive 'em, and then all of a sudden you bust right in. They might as well take it all in one gulp, so to speak, like a dose of medicine—only, of course, this'll be sweet for 'em.

DAVE. All right, I will. It will give me a chance to get my courage up. (*Goes to R.*)

ANN. And when is she going to appear on the scene?

DAVE. M'm—well, after I've explained a little, why, then—then I'll say I have something else, and I'll go and get her, and—and that will be the climax.

ANN. I guess it will. "The finishing touch," as the old saying is. But you'd better go. Here they are.

(The bells have grown louder and louder, as the sleigh is supposed to draw near; they now stop suddenly, but with lingering softer jingles, as a man's voice is heard outside calling "Whoa!" ANN goes up and looks out of window; DAVE looks over her shoulder carefully, for a minute, then hurries across and exits R. ANN goes and opens door in F. There is a whirl of snow, as, after a pause, ENOCH, in overcoat and cap, enters, with bags. He is followed by ROSE, who assists JANE. They are all bundled up, with snow on their wraps. ANN stands back, looking at them, tremulous between tears and smiles. JANE goes to L. C., assisted by ROSE, and sinks into rocking-chair. She sits a moment as if dazed, staring about the room. ROSE stands by her, doing the same. ENOCH stands at back. ANN, having closed door, comes down to C.)

JANE (*clasping her hands together, her voice trembling*). Rose—what does it mean? Where are we? Am I dreaming——? (*Noticing ANN.*) Ann—Ann Rickett! Is it—you?

ANN. Yes, Miss Whitman, it's me. Here I am, just the same as when you went away.

JANE. Went away? Away? From —— (*Rising, feebly, taking a step or two.*) Why, is this—am I back at—at Home Acres? No, no, it can't be. It must be a dream—another dream——

ROSE. No, Auntie, dear, it isn't a dream. It's true. We are back home—in our old home. I don't know how it has all happened—I don't understand at all—but—— Oh, it is true! It is, isn't it, Miss Rickett?

ANN. Yes, dear, it's true. You're home again—to stay.

ROSE. But—how can we be—— Oh, I don't understand—I——

(*She breaks down, sobbing and ANN takes her in her arms. JANE again sinks into chair, clasping her hands and looking about, also weeping, in her bewilderment.*)

ANN. My land, what's the matter with you two? You'll have me cryin' too, in a minute. It's enough to affect a stone image, if I do say so.

(*Enter JOHN, D. F., in overcoat, well bundled up. He looks about, also in a bewildered manner; ROSE runs to him, seizing his arm.*)

ROSE. John—John! what does it mean? We are back at Home Acres, and—and Ann says—she says it is still our home, and that we are here to stay.

JOHN (*coming down; he is rather stern, perplexed, with an attitude that indicates doubt, mixed with pride*). I don't know what it means. There seems to be a mystery somewhere. I understood we were to come back as Dave's guests, until I could look about and see what to do. But here—Home Acres—it's too much for me.

ROSE. And for me, too.

JANE. I'm all in a perfect muddle. I can hardly believe it. Ann, you know—you must know, what it means. Tell us—don't keep us in suspense.

JOHN. Yes, Miss Rickett, if you have the solution to this conundrum, out with it.

ANN. Why, I—I d' know's I've got any solution, so to speak. I believe—well, I guess it's been arranged some way. Mebbe you'd better ask Dave Holden. I reckon he's got the answer.

ROSE. Dave! Dear, good, unselfish Dave! After the way we've treated him, too.

ANN. He ain't holdin' that ag'inst you. That ain't Dave. He's one man in a million, and the best of the hull caboodle of 'em.

JOHN. Where is he?

ANN. He just stepped out—he's in the kitchen, I guess. I'll go call him.

JOHN. Yes, do. (*He still has on overcoat, having removed only his hat.*) We've got to get to the bottom of this.

ANN. Well, he's at the bottom of it, all right, if y' want to know. I s'pose he'd give me fits for sayin' so, but it's time it was known. (*Going R.*) I'll call him. (*Exit ANN R. JOHN stands by JANE, who is still seated L.; ROSE is C. There is a slight pause, then DAVE enters R., impelled by ANN, who follows him.*) Here he is. He acts half afraid, but I've brought him.

ROSE (*going to DAVE, grasping his hand*). Dave! Oh, Dave, how good it is to see you—to be back here—home again.

DAVE. Is it, Rose? Then I'm glad. If only you care, and are glad, I—that's enough.

ROSE. Enough? I guess it isn't—half. I'm going to kiss you for it.

(*She suddenly reaches up and kisses him. He is almost overcome with surprise and joy.*)

JANE. Why—Rose!

(*ROSE goes to DAVE, taking both his hands.*)

ROSE. I know—but I don't care—that's his answer. You did ask me something, didn't you, Dave? And you were waiting for my answer?

DAVE. I sure was. And I've got it—the right one, too, praise be.

(He takes her in his arms, she nestling up to him, both radiant with joy. JANE sits, almost overcome.)

ANN. There, Dave, what'd I tell y'?

DAVE. I know. But it seemed too good to be true.

JOHN. But what's true, that's what I want to know?

I think it's about time we had an explanation, Dave. Of course, I know I owe it to you that the man I thought was my friend was unmasked, and that that rascal, Ferguson, had to disgorge and refund the money I had entrusted to him. I know that, Dave, and I thank you for it all, from the bottom of my heart. I hope I'm man enough, in spite of all that's happened—what I have done—to acknowledge now that you are a real, true friend.

DAVE. Oh, that's all right, John. It was for Rose, you know, so I wasn't so unselfish about it.

JOHN. Don't try to depreciate yourself. I know. Will you let me call you my friend, Dave?

(Extends his hand, which DAVE grasps firmly.)

DAVE. Rather! Aren't we going to be brothers?

JOHN. And now tell me—about this place. Who is the real owner? You?

DAVE. Well, you've guessed it. I bought it right at the start, John, from Matt Culver, and made him promise not to tell. I thought you might want it back some day ——

JOHN. Want it back?

DAVE. Sure. When you got enough of city life and made up your mind maybe you were cut out to be a farmer after all—a “gentleman farmer,” of course, John.

JOHN. I hope I can learn to be the real “gentleman” you are, Dave.

DAVE. Oh, pshaw! M'm—well, then when Clay and that Ferguson scamp tried to buy your farm, cheap, through Culver, I let them think they could

have it, and led them on. They never caught on who the owner really was, you know. I fooled them. Then I ferreted out Ferguson's record of crime, and though he succeeded in getting Miss Whitman to sign away Rose's money, in addition to yours that you'd turned over to him, I exposed him and made him give it back. So I reckon it out, John, that you have enough left to buy the farm back from me, and start all over again. That is, if you want to settle down here.

ROSE. Dave—Dave, what a friend you have been!

DAVE. Well, you see what I was working for—at least, I see her, if you don't.

JANE (*who has risen*). Dave—my boy—my other boy! I want to kiss you too. (*She goes, puts her arms about DAVE and kisses him affectionately. She is weeping, and he almost breaks down. ROSE wipes her eyes; ANN stands at back, R., "using her handkerchief."* JOHN goes up L., his back turned to the others, as if not daring to trust himself to speak. JANE keeps DAVE a minute, then takes ROSE's hand and places it in his.) This is your reward, Dave—all I have to give you. And I think it is a rich one.

DAVE. It makes me the richest man in the world, Miss Whitman—and the proudest.

ROSE. And me the happiest girl—though I don't deserve it.

(DAVE silences her, his arm about her. JOHN comes down, facing DAVE.)

JOHN. And I give her to you too, Dave, and ask you to forgive me, and to let me prove that I appreciate what you have done for me. It humbles my pride, if I have any left, but I accept your offer.

DAVE. Good.

JANE. Then Home Acres is ours again. But yours, too, Dave, for you'll come here and live with us when ——

DAVE. When, Rose?

ROSE. Just when you say, Dave. "It's up to you," as Lib would say.

ANN. Land, I'm almost bustin', keepin' still all this time. I've got t' say something or I'll explode. Don't y' s'pose I've had anything to do with it 'r got any feelin's? You act as if I was a figure ought, and I don't think much of it, if I do say so.

(They all exclaim, and bring ANN down, consoling her. She smiles in great glee.)

DAVE. I know what is the matter with you, Ann Rickett. You want to spring the great surprise.

ROSE. Surprise? Not another one?

ANN. Huh! you think it's all over? Not much. It's up-stairs.

JANE. Up-stairs, Ann? What is?

ANN. The s'prise.

(Suddenly enter ENOCH and LIB, R. They stand R., arm in arm. Both are "all dressed up" in their new rigs, purchased in New York.)

JOHN. Is this it?

ANN. I guess it's one of 'em.

LIB. Say, how long you think we's goin' t' stay out o' this party? Ain't it 'bout time we got invited in?

ROSE. Of course it is. But where under the sun did you come from? Dave did this, too, I suppose.

(LIB makes a bow.)

LIB. You bet he did—both of us. Me 'n' Enoch. He brung us back ahead of you, and here we be.

JANE. "Are," child. Now I'm happier than ever. It wouldn't seem like Home Acres without you and Enoch.

ENOCH. Gosh, that's good! Just the way I felt about it. Wouldn't object t' hirin' man 'n' wife, 'nstead o' sep'rate, would y'?

JANE. What!—you two?

ENOCH. Well, two's enough t' make a pair, ain't it?

LIB *(pushing him)*. Oh, you! You had t' go and let

the cat out of the bag. I ain't promised for sure yet, anyway. Don't be too previous.

(He seizes her about waist, trying to kiss her; she "cuffs" him. The others laugh.)

JANE. Dear me, if anything more happens, I can't stand it. *(Looking about.)* Home Acres!

ANN. Oh, yes you can—you'll have t'. "Joy never killed a cat yet," y' know, so I guess you'll live through it.

ROSE. But there can't be anything more?

ANN. You never can tell. It might. Eh, Dave?

DAVE. Search me. I feel as if I couldn't stand much more either.

JOHN. It has all been rather exciting, I'll admit. Suppose we go in the other room and quiet down a bit.

JANE. Yes, I think we'd better —

(Almost overcome, near to tears. JOHN is on one side of her, ROSE on the other; they support her and lead her off L., ROSE looking back at DAVE.)

ROSE. Coming, Dave?

DAVE. Yes, dear, in just a minute.

ANN. I must say, I'm sort of all in a flummadiddle myself. Have t' get busy or I'll have a c'nption. *(To ENOCH and LIB.)* Say, you two, you've got to go and get some supper ready, if you be engaged. All dressed up like that, too.

LIB. Well, they's such things as apr'ns, ain't they?

ANN. Yes, and you go 'n' put 'em on, both of you. I'll be out and help y' in a minute.

ENOCH. All right. Come on, "Sweetie."

LIB. Oh, cheese it! Let up on such mush, or I'll swat y' one.

ANN. For the land's sake, such talk! I thought you was goin' t' improve and be a lady.

LIB. Who, me? D'you think if I was a "lady" I'd marry a boob like that?

ENOCH. "Boob," eh? S'pose I am, 'r I wouldn't want you.

LIB. Well, you ain't got me yet, you, so don't be too sure.

(She starts to slap him, but he seizes her, attempting to kiss her, and they go off R., struggling.)

ANN. If they don't beat all. Y' might as well try t' tame a pair o' wild hyenees. I guess I'd better go 'n' look after them.

(Enter HELEN, R. ANN looks at her in amazed admiration.)

HELEN. Well, don't you know me?

ANN. Of—of course I do, but—you look so pretty. I didn't know who you was. What will John Whitman say?

HELEN. I hope he will say "Yes" when I beg his forgiveness——

ANN. And that you'll get a chance to say "Yes," when he asks you—something else.

DAVE. Ann!

ANN. Well, she does, and he will—and she will—so what's the use pretendin'? Seems like a dream, doesn't it? Just like a fairy story, or one o' them Berthy M. Clay novels—only it's more romantic than the hull of 'em put t'gether, if I do say so.

(Exit ANN L. HELEN comes down to C. and DAVE goes to her.)

DAVE. I sort of feel that way myself, don't you?

HELEN. I don't know how I do feel—like an intruder, I guess. Just think of me coming here and waiting for him. What will he think?

DAVE. Think? Why, he'll think it's the best and grandest thing that ever happened—and ten thousand times more than he deserves—"if I do say so."

HELEN *(smiling, though almost in tears)*. To think what I was—what I did—and then, to expect him to forgive me. It's ten million times more than I deserve.

HOME ACRES

DAVE. I'm going to send him in—for the last and best surprise.

(He starts to L.; she seizes his arm.)

HELEN. Wait. I must get up my courage. If he should spurn me ——

DAVE. If the sky should fall! Stand right there. Wait.

(He quickly exits L. She starts to detain him, but he goes off. There is a slight pause, then JOHN enters L., looking about in a bewildered manner, not at first seeing HELEN, who has withdrawn up C. An organ, off L., begins playing "Home, Sweet Home," and then voices are heard softly singing the piece, continuing until after fall of curtain.)

JOHN. Why—there's nobody here. Dave said ——

HELEN *(coming down, speaking tremulously)*. John!

JOHN *(seeing her, as if dazed)*. Why—it —— Is it —— Helen! You?

HELEN. Yes, John. Are you glad?

JOHN. I—I don't understand. I thought ——

HELEN. You thought me mean, and wicked, and false. I was. But I'm sorry, John, oh, so sorry! I could spend my whole life trying to prove it to you, if—if you would let me. But if you can't—if you don't want me—I will go away again.

JOHN. Want—you! I don't understand—how it came about—how it can be—that you are here—but if you are—if it isn't a dream ——

HELEN. No, John, it's all true—if you want it to be ——

JOHN. Helen!

(He gazes straight at her, the truth gradually dawning upon him, as he realizes it all. Then he opens his arms and she goes to him; he clasps her closely.)

CURTAIN

Unusually Good Entertainments

Read One or More of These Before Deciding on
Your Next Program

GRADUATION DAY AT WOOD HILL SCHOOL.

An Entertainment in Two Acts, by WARD MACAULEY. For six males and four females, with several minor parts. Time of playing, two hours. Modern costumes. Simple interior scenes; may be presented in a hall without scenery. The unusual combination of a real "entertainment," including music, recitations, etc., with an interesting love story. The graduation exercises include short speeches, recitations, songs, funny interruptions, and a comical speech by a country school trustee.

EXAMINATION DAY AT WOOD HILL SCHOOL.

An Entertainment in One Act, by WARD MACAULEY. Eight male and six female characters, with minor parts. Plays one hour. Scene, an easy interior, or may be given without scenery. Costumes, modern. Miss Marks, the teacher, refuses to marry a trustee, who threatens to discharge her. The examination includes recitations and songs, and brings out many funny answers to questions. At the close Robert Coleman, an old lover, claims the teacher. Very easy and very effective.

BACK TO THE COUNTRY STORE. A Rural Entertainment in Three Acts, by WARD MACAULEY. For four male and five female characters, with some supers. Time, two hours. Two scenes, both easy interiors. Can be played effectively without scenery. Costumes, modern. All the principal parts are sure hits. Quigley Higginbotham, known as "Quig," a clerk in a country store, aspires to be a great author or singer and decides to try his fortunes in New York. The last scene is in Quig's home. He returns a failure but is offered a partnership in the country store. He pops the question in the midst of a surprise party given in his honor. Easy to do and very funny.

THE DISTRICT CONVENTION. A Farcical Sketch in One Act, by FRANK DUMONT. For eleven males and one female, or twelve males. Any number of other parts or supernumeraries may be added. Plays forty-five minutes. No special scenery is required, and the costumes and properties are all easy. The play shows an uproarious political nominating convention. The climax comes when a woman's rights champion, captures the convention. There is a great chance to burlesque modern politics and to work in local gags. Every part will make a hit.

SI SLOCUM'S COUNTRY STORE. An Entertainment in One Act, by FRANK DUMONT. Eleven male and five female characters with supernumeraries. Several parts may be doubled. Plays one hour. Interior scene, or may be played without set scenery. Costumes, modern. The rehearsal for an entertainment in the village church gives plenty of opportunity for specialty work. A very jolly entertainment of the sort adapted to almost any place or occasion.

THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA

Unusually Good Entertainments

Read One or More of These Before Deciding on
Your Next Program

A SURPRISE PARTY AT BRINKLEY'S. An Entertainment in One Scene, by WARD MACAULEY. Seven male and seven female characters. Interior scene, or may be given without scenery. Costumes, modern. Time, one hour. By the author of the popular successes, "Graduation Day at Wood Hill School," "Back to the Country Store," etc. The villagers have planned a birthday surprise party for Mary Brinkley, recently graduated from college. They all join in jolly games, songs, conundrums, etc., and Mary becomes engaged, which surprises the surprisers. The entertainment is a sure success.

JONES VS. JINKS. A Mock Trial in One Act, by EDWARD MUMFORD. Fifteen male and six female characters, with supernumeraries if desired. May be played all male. Many of the parts (members of the jury, etc.) are small. Scene, a simple interior; may be played without scenery. Costumes, modern. Time of playing, one hour. This mock trial has many novel features, unusual characters and quick action. Nearly every character has a funny entrance and laughable lines. There are many rich parts, and fast fun throughout.

THE SIGHT-SEEING CAR. A Comedy Sketch in One Act, by ERNEST M. GOULD. For seven males, two females, or may be all male. Parts may be doubled, with quick changes, so that four persons may play the sketch. Time, forty-five minutes. Simple street scene. Costumes, modern. The superintendent of a sight-seeing automobile engages two men to run the machine. A Jew, a farmer, a fat lady and other humorous characters give them all kinds of trouble. This is a regular gatling-gun stream of rollicking repartee.

THE CASE OF SMYTHE VS. SMITH. An Original Mock Trial in One Act, by FRANK DUMONT. Eighteen males and two females, or may be all male. Plays about one hour. Scene, a county courtroom; requires no scenery; may be played in an ordinary hall. Costumes, modern. This entertainment is nearly perfect of its kind, and a sure success. It can be easily produced in any place or on any occasion, and provides almost any number of good parts.

THE OLD MAIDS' ASSOCIATION. A Farcical Entertainment in One Act, by LOUISE LATHAM WILSON. For thirteen females and one male. The male part may be played by a female, and the number of characters increased to twenty or more. Time, forty minutes. The play requires neither scenery nor properties, and very little in the way of costumes. Can easily be prepared in one or two rehearsals.

BARGAIN DAY AT BLOOMSTEIN'S. A Farcical Entertainment in One Act, by EDWARD MUMFORD. For five males and ten females, with supers. Interior scene. Costumes, modern. Time, thirty minutes. The characters and the situations which arise from their endeavors to buy and sell make rapid-fire fun from start to finish.

Successful Plays for All Girls

In Selecting Your Next Play Do Not Overlook This List

YOUNG DOCTOR DEVINE. A Farce in Two Acts, by MRS. E. J. H. GOODFELLOW. One of the most popular plays for girls. For nine female characters. Time in playing, thirty minutes. Scenery, ordinary interior. Modern costumes. Girls in a boarding-school, learning that a young doctor is coming to vaccinate all the pupils, eagerly consult each other as to the manner of fascinating the physician. When the doctor appears upon the scene the pupils discover that the physician is a female practitioner.

SISTER MASONS. A Burlesque in One Act, by FRANK DUMONT. For eleven females. Time, thirty minutes. Costumes, fantastic gowns, or dominoes. Scene, interior. A grand expose of Masonry. Some women profess to learn the secrets of a Masonic lodge by hearing their husbands talk in their sleep, and they institute a similar organization.

A COMMANDING POSITION. A Farcical Entertainment, by AMELIA SANFORD. For seven female characters and ten or more other ladies and children. Time, one hour. Costumes, modern. Scenes, easy interiors and one street scene. Marian Young gets tired living with her aunt, Miss Skinflint. She decides to "attain a commanding position." Marian tries hospital nursing, college settlement work and school teaching, but decides to go back to housework.

HOW A WOMAN KEEPS A SECRET. A Comedy in One Act, by FRANK DUMONT. For ten female characters. Time, half an hour. Scene, an easy interior. Costumes, modern. Mabel Sweetly has just become engaged to Harold, but it's "the deepest kind of a secret." Before announcing it they must win the approval of Harold's uncle, now in Europe, or lose a possible ten thousand a year. At a tea Mabel meets her dearest friend. Maude sees Mabel has a secret, she coaxes and Mabel tells her. But Maude lets out the secret in a few minutes to another friend and so the secret travels.

THE OXFORD AFFAIR. A Comedy in Three Acts, by JOSEPHINE H. COBB and JENNIE E. PAINE. For eight female characters. Plays one hour and three-quarters. Scenes, interiors at a seaside hotel. Costumes, modern. The action of the play is located at a summer resort. Alice Graham, in order to chaperon herself, poses as a widow, and Miss Oxford first claims her as a sister-in-law, then denounces her. The onerous duties of Miss Oxford, who attempts to serve as chaperon to Miss Howe and Miss Ashton in the face of many obstacles, furnish an evening of rare enjoyment.

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